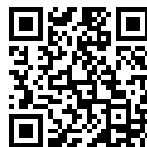

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**SISTER'S VOCATION and
other GIRLS' STORIES**

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SISTER'S VOCATION and other GIRLS' STORIES::::::::::::

By

Josephine Dodge Daskam Bacon



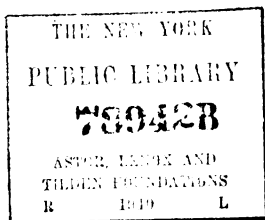
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You stand at the brim o' the hill, little girl,
And look with a sweet despair
At the melting hill-tops of purple red,
With the fleecy bars of the blue o'er head,
And you want to be running still, little girl,
To the country of Over There.

Oh, a brave, brave country it shows, little girl,
With colors and trappings rare,
A bustle of happy sounds and sights,
A glistening current of sweet delights,
Where everyone's known and knows, little girl,
In the country of Over There.

There are strains of a sweeter song, little girl,
Than hearts of this land can bear,
There are delicate whispers and flitting feet,
And gay, bright laughing at pleasures fleet,
Where nothing but sorrow's wrong, little girl,
In that country of Over There.

But no one can tell you the way, little girl,
To that land so dear and fair;
It glows in the sunset pools of light,
It shines in the starry clouds at night,
And only your heart can stray, little girl,
To the country of Over There.

Sister's Vocation

Sister's Vocation

AT the window of a large and stately guest-chamber of a large and stately house there sat, one day, a small and disconsolate young lady dressed in black. There was nothing about her appearance to afford material for brilliant description. She had brown eyes and brown hair, and a jolly little laugh, and she had been called "Sister" by two small brothers, two aunts, and a father all her life. If that does not describe her, what would?

Though her room was handsomely furnished; though she had a share in the services of four maids, two men, and a gardener; though there were tea and little thin sandwiches going on in one of the parlors, and a great number of fine books in the library, and a grand piano in the music-room, yet Sister was very unhappy.

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It was not entirely because her father had died, and the two little boys had been sent away to school. That was six months ago, and Sister was a brave girl, and a healthy one, too. She and her father had been busy all their lives, and had scant respect for people who sat idle too long for the sake of grief. She remembered how, when her mother died, her father had worked his hardest—and she knew now how he had felt then. She had come to Aunt Ida's with the firm determination not to obtrude herself or her sorrow, and she had succeeded. Indeed her success had been, if anything, too great. She had been a mother, a housekeeper, a teacher, and the best of friends to all her little family from the day when, on her fifteenth birthday, she had proudly taken Aunt Julia's place behind the coffee. She had reigned for three years, and now, her kingdom over, she had come to a house where she was the merest guest.

Aunt Ida was politely sympathetic with her little stranger niece, but she had not met her brother for years, and had never

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approved of his marriage nor his manner of bringing up his children. She had been a great beauty herself, and was very busy at making beauties of her two daughters and keeping up her social duties, which were many. She considered that in offering her niece a home she had done a most amiable and charitable thing, and that Sister could want any other employment than walking out for her health, and waiting till she could with propriety enter her aunt's social world, she could not comprehend. Poor Sister was not even allowed to dust her bed-room, so strict were Aunt Ida's views as to the proper occupations of a young lady, and was offered walks, music, shopping, and the charge of the invitations until the dancing-class and the fencing-club should begin. And Sister's cheeks grew thinner and whiter, and her mouth drooped at the corners that had been so happily curved in the upward direction. For she could not do these things at all. The fencing and dancing frightened her to think of, and as for the rest——

“It is most unfortunate,” said Aunt Ida,

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"that poor Henry's child has no vocation, so to speak. She has no beauty, and she is, unfortunately, not clever. She does not care for books, so unlucky in a plain girl, and she cannot play a note. She has no manner with company—in fact, her one desire seems to be to cook and clean! But, then, poor Henry had such ideas, and married so badly, you know."

Aunt Ida and Lois had gone south for ten days, and Gladys was visiting with a friend. So Sister was alone in the big house with a friend of her aunt's who was entertaining largely, and who paid no more attention to the slender, brown-eyed girl in black than as if she had not been in the house at all.

An afternoon tea was in progress on this particular day, and Sister could hear the plates rattle and the voices chatter, and the big hall-door open and close every ten minutes. She would gladly have cut the thin sandwiches and dusted the big parlors, but that, she knew, was absolutely forbidden her. The crowds of people frightened her, and she felt, oh! terribly in the way, terribly

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useless and left out, and utterly unworthy of the big guest-room.

As her eyes wandered up and down the street they brightened suddenly. Coming out of the corner house, opposite Aunt Ida's, were two handsome little fellows of six or seven dragging a broken express-cart noisily down the steps. For the sake of Harold and Teddy all little boys were dear to Sister. She caught the older child's eye and waved her hand, and just at that minute, the younger one slipped and fell on the steps. The street was perfectly empty just then, and though Sister heard his screaming, no one else seemed to pay any attention. No nurse ran down the steps to pick him up; no frightened mother leaned out of the window. He lay where he had fallen on the bottom stair, and his brother bent tenderly over him, patting his little cropped head and trying to pull him up. But he only sobbed harder, and refused to roll off the cold stone. This was beyond Sister's endurance. She threw a cape over her shoulders, and ran down the hall-stairs and out of the door. She was across the

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street in a moment, and in another the little fellow was on her lap.

She kissed the place to make it well in the dear traditional fashion, and before they knew it, they were playing all three together; Sister an intending passenger in the express-cart, and Howard and Billy the driver and horse, respectively. Then, as it grew a little chilly and Billy coughed and sneezed, Sister would have left them had not Howard's little chin began to quiver at the suggestion. He looked too much like Teddy; and with a doubtful glance at Aunt Ida's front door, Sister went in with them.

"What will Mamma say to a strange girl in her house?" she asked, as they climbed the steps.

"Oh, Mamma don't live here, she lives in heaven," said Howard, cheerfully, and Billy added, "Summer and winter, too—all the year 'round, she stays there!"

Sister's heart warmed to them even more. "And Papa?" she asked, as they pushed the door open.

"Papa's gone off for a week," returned Howard, the older. "He's gone to cure a

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sick lady all well ; there's nobody but Annie and Ellen, and Ellen went yesterday."

Sister looked about the hall in amazement. It was a handsome, old-fashioned hall running through the house, and the rooms opening from it, though fewer and smaller than Aunt Ida's, were well furnished and attractive ; but the dust of weeks covered rugs and chairs, a litter of toys and food was everywhere, the windows were clouded and dirty, and the remains of many fires had spread over the hearths in the front rooms. Chairs were overturned, books lay with bent backs, a close musty odor pervaded the lower story, and a smoky flat air rushed down from upstairs as she followed the children up to the nursery.

"Who takes care of you—what grown person?" she asked, as they went into a close unaired play-room, and the older boy began carefully taking off his brother's little leggings before touching his own things. Howard looked puzzled.

"I guess Aunt Lilly does," he returned, with an odd little laugh. "But Aunt Lilly's got a drefful ache in her face, an'

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she has the nerves, too. I hope she's better," he added, carelessly. "I haven't seen her since two or three days before yesterday—or maybe yesterday, I saw her"—as he caught the amazement in Sister's face.

"Why, but this is dreadful!" cried Sister. "Does Papa know that Aunt Lilly is sick?"

Howard was getting out some tin soldiers, and did not answer; but little Billy stood up and with hands folded tightly over his little stomach and his chin in the air, mimicked: "Children, children, *do* go away! You make me *cwazy*!"

The situation was obvious, and Sister grew more and more interested. The children had such pretty little ways, and were so strong and handsome, that even their dirty faces and tumbled, untidy clothes could not disguise the fact that they had been well brought up on the whole. That they should be alone in the house with a nervous invalid, and servants too clearly incompetent, seemed horrible to the sister of Ted and Harold. The furniture and belongings of the house showed comfort, if

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not wealth, and she felt sure that there must be some great mistake on somebody's part to account for such a pitiful condition of affairs.

As she considered whether or not she had any right to push her inquiries further, the nursery clock struck six, and Howard dragged two tall chairs to the table, and got out some spoons and bowls from a cupboard near the fire-place.

"Annie said bread and milk was all we'd get till Ellen sent somebody," he explained to Sister, "and she said we could come down to get it when it was six o'clock."

He started from the room, and Sister followed him through a long dirty hall into a fine large kitchen. It was as untidy as only a badly tended kitchen can be, and before the fire, on a long bench, lay a large heavy woman fast asleep, breathing heavily. Her face was flushed, and Sister saw with disgust a bottle and half-empty glass on the floor beside her. The children paid no attention to her, but took a big pitcher and a plate of bread from a side-table and left the kitchen immediately: Sister, her lips

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pressed tight together and a stern look in the jolly brown eyes, behind them.

"Where is Aunt Lilly's room?" she asked them, when they were well settled over the bread and milk. Billy pointed to a door at the end of the hall that led out of the nursery, and Sister was knocking at it in a moment.

"Is that Ellen?" a high, fretful voice called out. "Ellen, I'll have no more complaints; I'm not strong enough to bear them! If Annie is drunk again, dismiss her immediately, and get another. My meals are outrageously served—outrageously! I don't know what the doctor will say when he gets back. Why are you paid twenty-five dollars a month if you can't manage better?"

"It's not Ellen," Sister began.

"Then stop rattling the door; you can't get in. Who is it?"

Sister's head rose, and her eyes sparkled dangerously.

"I'm not a servant, and I cannot talk through the door!" she said, decidedly.

There was a pause and finally the door

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opened a little. Sister pressed through the opening and confronted a tall, thin, peevish-looking woman, with a bandage tied around her head.

The room was like all the others, uncared for and close, with various trays and bottles and other evidences of an invalid's room scattered about.

"I am Mrs. Underwood's niece—across the street," Sister explained politely, in answer to the woman's surprised face.

"I came in to play with the children. I am very fond of children, and—and—the nurse seems to have left, and the cook is—is unable to cook, I should say, and the little boy seems to have a bad cold——"

"Dear, dear, I suppose so!" interrupted Aunt Lilly. "It's always the way! I'm far too delicate and nervous to be at the head of this house, I always was. And Robert gone for a week! Dear, dear!"

She was so frankly helpless, so irresponsible for the whole matter, that Sister grew bolder.

"Oughtn't you to get another nurse and a cook?" she suggested, as Aunt Lilly sank

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back in a comfortable chair and sniffed salts from a tarnished silver bottle.

"Dear me, yes! But I don't know of any—do you? And I certainly can't move. I'm growing sicker every second: worry always makes me quite ill!"

"The children might as well be alone in the house!" thought Sister, in consternation.

"I depended so much on Ellen; if only somebody could be got till the doctor gets back! He engages the maids, it wears on me so," complained Aunt Lilly.

She was certainly very pale, and she had evidently no intentions whatever of leaving her room. A dazzling idea came to Sister's mind, an idea that made her cheeks flush and her voice shake as she said, timidly: "I happen to know of a good cook that Aunt Ida had, and—and—I could take care of the children till he came, if you—not unless you like, of course—if you could trust me. I was housekeeper at home——"

It was out. Would she be ordered from the house? Would Aunt Lilly laugh at her?

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That lady took another sniff at her salts. "That's very kind of you, I'm sure," she said, languidly. "When you get the cook, tell her I like toast soft in the middle and a pale-brown, and do try to keep the children out of this hall, please!"

Sister stared. "How much do you pay the cook, Miss—Miss Lilly?" she asked.

"I think Robert pays sixteen dollars a month, but I'm sure I can't be expected to do all this!" she broke out, fretfully. "Pay what seems best, if you know the cook, I'm sure!"

She turned her head away, and Sister felt dismissed.

"One thing more," said the girl, timidly, for she was afraid that Miss Lilly might grow vexed to the point of reconsidering her permission, "the house needs cleaning, I'm sure, if you could see it—can I get a woman in for a day to help?"

Miss Lilly's eyes remained closed, and though Sister repeated the question, there was an obstinate silence. So she closed the door, and half frightened at her temerity and half jubilant at what seemed

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to her hungry little soul the prospect of a feast of delightful work, she went down to the kitchen. To her infinite relief it was empty. As she entered the nursery, Howard met her, a worried look on his little face.

"Annie's gone, too," he said, simply. Sister's eyes filled with tears as she watched him turn back to quiet Billy, who had fallen into an uncomfortable doze on the high chair, and was whimpering in the dark, half awake.

"I have to take care of Billy till Papa gets back," said the little fellow, confidentially. Sister took Billy into her lap, and put one arm around his brother.

"I have two little brothers," she said, cheerfully, "but they're big, now."

"How big?" inquired Howard.

"Harold is eleven and Teddy is thirteen, and so they are off at school. I feel very lonesome for them sometimes. May I stay and take care of you until Papa gets back?"

"Instead of Ellen?"

"Yes, instead of Ellen."

"I'd like it," said Howard, seriously.

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"Ellen wouldn't play passenger at all the last day."

So that was settled, and at her request they took her to the room off the nursery where their two white little beds stood. It was cold and dark, but she found wood for a fire and fresh linen for the tumbled beds. They had a nice bath and a glorious pillow-fight, and for the first time in months Sister was kissed two warm and noisy good-nights. She left them fast asleep, and slipped out across the dark street. She had a moment of uneasiness as she saw in imagination Aunt Ida's horrified face, but, while she put some things in her bag and went down the stairs to find Aunt Ida's friend, she thought how her father had gone into old Dr. Duncan's house once and "played Uncle" for a week, when things seemed to be beyond poor Miss Duncan's control.

"I felt that I was wanted, Sister, and so I went," was all the explanation he had ever given her. And she felt that she was wanted, just now, at Aunt Lilly's. Certainly, no one wanted her here, she felt, as when

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she said quietly that she was going to help the doctor's sister take care of the children, Miss Taylor shrugged her shoulders and replied indifferently that she was the best judge of what she should do.

That night she slept in the room with Billy and Howard, and the next day saw great changes in the doctor's house. To the ecstatic delight of the boys they were allowed to play about in the kitchen while Sister, enveloped in a big print-apron, got breakfast for all three with a skill born of days' and weeks' experience of a cookless family. Then the most inviting of trays found its way to Aunt Lilly's room in the hands of a neat little maid who, though evidently unable to take Ellen's place, had appeared early in the day, at that nurse's orders, and who agreed to stay at any rate until the doctor should come. A message to Norah Flaherty, who had been dismissed from Aunt Ida's house for some trifling error, brought a good trusty cook, and ten o'clock saw a cleaning-woman with her pail and mop established in the hall.

Oh, but those were days! All the house-

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keeper in Sister revelled in such an opportunity for activity; all the mother in her delighted in tending the wondering children as they had never been tended since "Mamma gave us barfs just the way you do," as they confided to Sister.

And her ambition soared higher as the grateful house repaid the toil of its busy little mistress and her three helpers. In two days the lower story was reflecting from window to polished floor the dancing fire-light, the freshened rugs, the shining furniture, and Sister pined for new worlds to conquer. The nursery must be done, of course, and it would be a shame, as the cleaning-woman herself admitted, to stop at that.

So, on the fifth morning, Aunt Lilly was surprised to find Mrs. Underwood's remarkable niece standing by her bed with empty hands, instead of little Maggie with the usual tray.

"I have served your breakfast in the guest-chamber, Miss Lilly, for this morning," said this young lady, "and I will help you in there to eat it."

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Aunt Lilly stared in undisguised displeasure.

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing," she returned pettishly, "this room is well enough: I have a headache," and she closed her eyes.

"That," returned the young lady in the print-apron and little dusting-cap, decidedly, "is because it is so stuffy and close in here—nothing else; and it is so dark that I can't see to find all the glasses and silver that are up here."

Miss Lilly opened her eyes. Was this competent, brisk, bright-eyed person the timid, sad young girl that had told her she knew of a cook? What was she doing? Actually the blinds were going up—the windows were open.

"I'll go! I'll go!" cried Aunt Lilly, in dismay. "Bring me my wrapper!"

So Sister and her trusty woman fell upon the last stronghold of disorder, and while they scrubbed and shook and aired, Aunt Lilly consumed pleasant little lunches in the shining guest-chamber; Norah Flaherty sang cheerfully in the sunny kitch-

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en, and the children trotted contentedly through the "pretty new house," enjoying like little animals the cleanliness and warmth and comfort they had so missed, yet could not precisely understand nor describe. They took the present situation as simply as they had borne the past unpleasantness, and neither Maggie nor Norah ever guessed that the young lady who sang over her work, played with the children, and yet had a lynx-eye for dirt and disorder, was not an old friend of the family and the natural guardian of the boys in their father's absence.

It was the sixth day of Sister's reign, and, after superhuman labor on the part of Norah and Maggie and with the help of Billy and Howard, who stuck all the pins into the rings, the glistening windows were suitably shrouded in curtains so fresh and spotless that even Aunt Ida's looked a little wilted by comparison. It was the last touch, for the door-bell and brass-plate had been polished the day before, and Sister, with an almost pathetic sense that there was absolutely nothing else to be done, had dis-

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missed the admiring cleaning-woman and settled down to mending.

The twilight was over the city, and a fine cold rain was falling. Wet and chilly travellers cast envious eyes at the red-light-ed windows of the comfortable square house on the corner, and one of them heaved a sigh of relief as his buggy drew up before it.

"Take Prince around, Peter, and bring in some wood immediately—it will be colder than a barn, probably. Ellen will neglect the fires so!"

He sprang up the steps very eagerly for a man of his years. He never returned from the shortest absence without a horrid fear that something had happened to his two babies, and something in Aunt Lilly's look as he hastily bade her good-by had made him tremble at the thought that her neuralgia might be approaching. But it was too early for that, he had consoled himself, and the professional opportunity was too good to lose by staying at home. So he had left Howard and Billy to Ellen, and Ellen, though she had grown negligent of

Sister's Vocation

late, was really fond of them, poor little fellows!

"It's no way for them to live—no way at all!" he muttered, vainly hunting for his latch-key. "The house is not fit for them to grow up in, and poor Lilly grows less competent every week. It's a pitiful home to come to, when a man's tired out! But whom can I get? Some housekeeper——"

He gave up the search for his key and pulled the bell sharply, staring hard at the neat white-aproned little maid who so pleasantly replaced the dawdling untidy Ellen.

"I am Dr. Watson, and I will find the boys myself; please do not tell them that I am here," he said to her. It was his great pleasure to steal on them unexpectedly and catch their first delighted looks and cries, and he stepped softly through the hall to find them.

He was a man, you see, and men cannot explain definitely what it is that transforms an untidy house into a well-kept home, but he felt that the hall was somehow different as he peeped into the parlor. There the

Sister's Vocation

change was too evident to allow of any doubt; the snowy curtains, the shining grate, the sweet clean air, soon observed by a physician who had fought for a year against dust and stale odors, the absence of toys and clothes—all struck him as he went through.

“It cannot be that Lilly——” he thought, and then he went into the study, where thought failed him. For one year he had watched the household machinery run slowly down, but early in the day he had sternly forbidden both children and servants from meddling with “Papa’s room,” the one place that had been sacred for all the years since his young wife had ceased to arrange it. He had tried to keep it neat, but it had gradually grown into such chaos that he had dreaded to begin the task of arranging it. And lo, it was done! Every little ornament in its accustomed place; clothing, books, papers and instruments sorted and put away; the brightest of fires leaping——“the chimney has been repaired!”——on the hearth, the dark red curtains comfortably drawn; the books well

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dusted on the study table, the lamps all trimmed and cleaned, and strangest sight of all, three red roses nodding over a tall vase on the mantel!

He ran up the stairs, wondering as he ran at the stillness over all the house. No doors banged, no children called out, no fretful aunt or angry nurse scolded them; all was quiet, orderly, prepared for his inspection. Aunt Lilly's door was half open—wonder of wonders!—and peeping through, he beheld that invalid in a regenerated room, clad in a house-dress that bore no resemblance whatever to the bath-robe that she commonly wore, peacefully doing fancy work, with no sign of the tray, bottles, and tarnished vinaigrette that invariably accompanied her.

As he knocked at the door she did not look up.

"I hope the soup will be thinner to-night, Sister," she said. "I am confident that Norah never strains it," and she sewed on peacefully.

"Good heavens, Lilly, is there a nurse in the house? Who is sick?"

Sister's Vocation

Her brother advanced into the room, and caught her hands nervously.

Aunt Lilly drew away with some irritation. "I must say, Robert, you are very startling. Of course nobody is sick—you will send me into nervous prostration! We are all as well as ever."

"Whom do you call Sister? Who has made the house over? Where are the children?"

"Mrs. Underwood's niece—a very energetic girl—has been here with the children. They seem very fond of her, and she certainly manages them wonderfully. As to the house, it has been turned topsy-turvy more or less—I was out of my room one whole day! But as long as the children are quiet I ought not to complain, I suppose. Still, the soup was not strained yesterday——"

"Oh, bother the soup, Lilly! Do you mean to say that a perfect stranger has been managing this house since I left?"

"She's not a perfect stranger, when it comes to that," returned Aunt Lilly, imperturbably. "It seems she is Frank

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Claxton's daughter, whom you used to have home from school with you—he died, you know. She quite cried when I said you would be here soon. She wanted to know if you mightn't be willing to keep her as a kind of assistant house-keeper, to take care of the boys. Ellen left, I believe, and Annie, too. She would be glad to do it for what Ellen got, she says, but that is nonsense, of course. She's a mere girl, and though the children are devoted to her——”

“Good heavens, Lilly, have you no gratitude? Don't you see—don't you understand, that it's because she won't offer to give us her services—for our sakes? Old Claxton's daughter? As fine a man as ever stepped! Live with us? At her own price—on any terms! Wasn't I going to hire a housekeeper? Where are the children?”

He was already down the hall and at the nursery door. Before it he paused to take in the pretty picture. In front of a roaring fire, in what was to him the cheeriest, brightest, warmest room in the world,

Sister's Vocation

Howard sat on a worn old fur rug, clasping his knees, gazing adoringly up at a slender girl in black with a basket piled high with little garments by her side and a stocking in her hand. Billy played quietly at her side, and a little table with bowls and spoons stood, white and neat, farther off.

"And what did Teddy do then, Sister?" said Howard, interestedly.

"What Ted do den?" echoed Billy, happily, standing a tin soldier on his head.

"Why, he just made another snow man and forgot all about the one that was spoiled," said the girl, "and after that—who is it?"

But before the boys could jump into his arms he was on the rug with them, pressing his iron-gray curls against their little brown, cropped heads.

He held out his hand to Sister, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Their mother sat with them here, like this," he said, simply, and Sister understood.

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And when she would have left them alone, the doctor pushed the boys away, and taking her hands, drew her to him and kissed her forehead.

"My dear little girl," he said, "I knew your father years ago too well to offer to take, or try to take, his place. I suppose you know that you are like him in many ways. But my sister tells me you would like to stay with us, and you cannot imagine how glad I should be to have you. If you can make it your home, you can surely make it ours!"

His kindly worn face, his fatherly air, the evident gratitude and interest in his keen clear eyes came even nearer Sister's heart than his words.

"I have thought it over, and I am sure Papa would like me to," she said, half to him, half to herself. "I'm sure I can do more here——"

"I'm drefful hungry, Sister!" pleaded little Howard, "it's drefful late!"

And Sister, who never spent much time in thought, not being intellectual, nor even clever, dropped consideration and set about

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the nursery supper, which had always appeared to her simple mind more important than any possible discussion could be!

A College Girl

A College Girl

ELEANOR GRAY walked slowly in- to the reading-room and sat down at the long table covered with blue-prints. She sat down and took up a book filled with "sample copies," but she did not turn the leaves. She looked about the room, at the long green tables covered with daily papers, at the divans around the walls, at the great fireplace, and the scattered groups of girls. As she looked her eyes filled with tears, and unconsciously she lifted her hand and wiped them away.

A pretty little freshman, who never looked anywhere but in Eleanor Gray's direction when that handsome and prominent junior was visible, stared harder than ever, and whispered to her room-mate, "Miss Gray's crying!"

"Nonsense!" said the room-mate, adding abstractedly, "but the line A B is

A College Girl

equal to the line C D, and therefore—therefore—why, what if she is? I suppose she can cry if she likes?”

“Yes,” said the freshman, meekly, “of course. But she must feel pretty bad to cry here in the reading-room. And I never thought that Eleanor Gray cried, anyhow. I wish I could—I wish I knew her better——”

“You are absurd,” said the room-mate, “and you know it. Anybody would think you never looked at anyone but Eleanor Gray. I don’t believe she’s crying, either. What should she have to cry for? She’s too conceited to cry——”

But the look in the freshman’s eyes stopped her. “She is conceited: you know perfectly well that she is!” she reiterated feebly from behind her geometry.

“She is not in the least conceited,” returned the freshman, coldly. “She is the most brilliant girl in her class, and everyone knows it. She has a right to look proud if she likes, and if she looks bored most of the time, which is what makes the girls angry, it is because she can’t help it;

A College Girl

if we were more interesting, she wouldn't look so bored!"

The room-mate dropped her book in her lap, and stared for a moment in silence. Then, as the gong struck the hour, she shook out her skirts and picked up her books. "I should advise you, my dear," she said, sweetly, "not to show so much disgust when Teddy Carroll tells us it's the greatest delight of her life to buy violets for Lena St. John—you're getting there fast! But you have my sympathy—for I doubt if you could interest Her Majesty, you know!"

But it was true, Eleanor Gray was crying, and no one could be more surprised at that fact than she. Through a mist of tears she looked at the familiar faces in the blue-print book—the Faculty, curiously labelled: "Miss Brown, with shawl;" "Miss Williams, on steps;" the students, in every conceivable position and combination: "J. Reading, smile;" "Lucia Cole, banjo;" "Cora Willis, Lou Hartes, and J. Peterson, in hammock;" "the president, with cat;" "the president, without cat."

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She had laughed at them all—now she was going to leave them. She had never bought blue-prints; she had no memorabilia. Now she would like some, but it was too late. If she had money to pay her bills, she was fortunate, Eleanor thought bitterly.

Someone was practising on the big organ in the chapel overhead. The queer, wheezing piston on the reading-room wall heaved up and down to the Bach fugue that repeated its doleful minors again and again. It was warm, warm with the delicious drowsy heat of the young spring term—the beautiful spring term with the long lazy evenings on the back campus, under the stars, in the hundred hammocks. And this would be her last spring term!

Somehow it was harder to go than she could have dreamed, last year. To go out in good order as a senior, with four years behind her, to get once more the admiration and pride in her that her class always felt when she had distinguished herself, and then to leave the whole thing finished, completed, and start out prepared for the larger

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life—that would not be so hard. All would feel alike, then. But to go as a junior, with all the things undone that she had meant to do, to leave to another editor the college paper that she had meant to manage so well, to lose the senior dramatics she had planned to enjoy so much—oh, it was hard! And all for the lack of a few pitiful hundred dollars!

She got up abruptly and left the room. As she passed through the hall, not looking at the large crowded bulletin-boards that lined the walls, someone called her name. "Excuse me, Miss Gray, but there's a note on the board for you!"

Eleanor looked up in some surprise at Clara Williston, a rich, unimportant girl whom she hardly knew. "Thank you," she said, with a cool nod, "I'll get it."

She opened the half-sheet of note-paper and glanced at it, only half-reading it, her eyes were so blurred with tears:

"DEAR NELL: Of course you remember our dance is to-morrow night. I've got you as good an order as I possibly could, and may I have the second extra? As ever,
KATE."

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How she had laughed at the dances and said they bored her, once! But they seemed the very essence of pleasure and music and light, now.

She walked home and changed her serge skirt and shirt-waist for a pretty light gown, open at the neck. She put on her rings, all of them, and went to supper. Although off the campus, the house where she lived was a popular one.

Never had she talked so brilliantly. Story after story she told the twenty girls at the table, till the room rang with laughter. She scowled and coughed and mimicked the dark professor, she simpered and smiled and affected the graces of the light one. More than one of her flashes of wit, her delicious paradoxes, her apt comparisons went the rounds of the class-room for weeks afterward.

When she left the table they crowded around her and followed her to the gate, wrapping her in that delicious atmosphere of admiring interest and affectionate appreciation that only a crowd of college girls can give their idol of the hour.

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"Where are you going, Miss Gray? Have you got to go? Won't you come down and have an ice with us?"

Eleanor smiled; the excitement of the supper-table flushed her cheeks. "Thank you, but I have an engagement with Miss Leeds," she said.

"Oh, how interesting it must be to know the Faculty!" gushed the sophomore with the pretty clothes. "But then, I suppose they're glad enough in your case! I should be so scared, I shouldn't dare to speak to them!"

Eleanor smiled. "You silly things!" she said, "they're very like other people—sometimes they're more so!" And she left them laughing at the gate.

She could not study, and even the elastic engagement with Miss Leeds seemed impossible to her. She strolled through the gate and went slowly to the back campus. Already it was covered with light dresses, and the soft tinkle of mandolins came from among the trees. Some of the glee-club girls were singing the "Little Alabama Coon," and near the observatory a few

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energetic seniors were trying to organize a universal "sing."

Eleanor felt a sudden longing to be with them all, to be close to her class-mates, and at the same time she dreaded having to talk to them. She slipped behind the trees to a vacant hammock, and sat slowly swinging to and fro. All about her floated fragments of conversation, and she tried idly to guess the speakers from their voices:

"So I said that I'd have him up for the Prom, but it seems that Kitty had asked him already—horrid, wasn't it? I hate to ask a man——"

"I'd just read eight pages of Freytag, and I was as cross as a bear. I said, 'I'm not prepared,' and I don't care what he thought——"

"Mary looked perfectly stunning! She carries herself so well, too. But I don't see how she does so much. She says she never gets to bed till eleven——"

"Oh, as for Katharine, she's too far gone for any use; she can't speak of anybody but Eleanor Gray. And I don't believe that Miss Gray knows who she is, do you?"

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"Well, good-night. I must simply do a little philosophy, or I shall be expelled. Think how embarrassing that would be!"

"Good-night!" and a girl in pale-blue dimity, that rustled crisply as she walked, left the departing philosopher and strolled over to Eleanor's hammock, stopping when she saw its occupant.

"Oh, don't go away," entreated Miss Gray. "Please come back! I was just going. Is this your hammock?" Then she saw that the girl was Clara Williston.

"I'll come," said Miss Williston, "only on condition that you don't go. Otherwise, I go immediately." She waited a moment, and then sat beside Eleanor. "I hope I sha'n't bore you to death?" she said.

Eleanor did not answer, but pulled her skirt aside as Miss Williston sat down. It occurred to her that very probably Clara Williston would spend more money for her commencement gown than she would need to finish her senior year!

"I want to tell you how much I enjoyed

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your story in the Monthly," said Miss Williston. "I don't see how you can think of such queer exciting things. Really, I got quite worked up over it! I hope, now you're editor, you won't stop writing."

Eleanor never quite knew why it was that she didn't make some conventional reply, and then go. She barely knew Miss Williston, and she was a girl who said very little of her own affairs to anyone, even the people she knew best. But to her own surprise, she looked over the campus and said easily: "I'm afraid I shall do very little writing, editorial or otherwise. I shall probably not be here next year."

"Not be here! Why, Miss Gray, what do you mean? Surely you're not going to lose the senior year? Truly, it's the very best of all! And what would the class do without you?"

Eleanor smiled. "I fear you overestimate my importance," she said. "I have always pitied the poor *alumnæ*, who had practically carried the college with them when they were here, and who are really

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forgotten by the next class but one. One doesn't count for much unless one's on deck all the time! And I don't doubt that the senior year is very pleasant, Miss Williston. But——"

"But, Miss Gray, it's dreadful! Why, the class—do they know it?"

"No," said Eleanor; "I haven't told anybody yet. I'm sure I don't know why I should tell you. Don't think of it. I'm here now, at all events. So you like the senior year the best? Kate Dickinson always said——"

"I don't care what she said," said Miss Williston, with a decision that annoyed the junior. "I want to talk about you. Now, don't look haughty, Miss Gray, *please*. I simply must. You mustn't think me rude, will you? Because I don't mean to. But—is it money?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, "it's money." And then, with a bitter little laugh, she folded her hands on her lap and looked at Miss Williston. "I suppose you can't understand how five hundred dollars can be an impossibility, can you?" she asked.

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"But, Miss Gray, you could earn it. You could write, you know——"

"Not at all," said Eleanor, shortly. "In the first place, I'm not ready to yet. In the second place, I should have to be sure. I couldn't live from hand to mouth, on a chance. It may do very well for a genius, but it won't do for me." She spoke quickly, and almost angrily, as if she were justifying herself to somebody behind Miss Williston.

"I have lived all my life in comfort. I can't starve in an attic just for a diploma. And then—oh, it's impossible!"

She turned her head away and talked low, as if to herself. Miss Williston listened with hushed breath, fearing to lose a word.

"You see," said Nell quickly, "it's all up with the family. They've kept it from me because I hate money matters. I don't understand them. And they thought they could get me through. But they can't. So I'm just going home. I can't teach—I loathe it. Besides, I haven't studied anything with a view to teaching—oh, why,"

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and she turned and stared at the senior as if just conscious of what she was saying, "why do I tell this to you? I must be crazy. I——"

"Because," said Clara Williston, quietly, "because I am just the one to tell it to. Do you mean to say, Miss Gray, that for the lack of five hundred dollars you are going to lose your last year?—for that, and nothing else?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, dominated utterly by this rich nobody, "yes, just that."

"Then," said Miss Williston, "then I say that it is absurd, and that you sha'n't do it. I can do very little at college, but I *can*——"

"My dear Miss Williston," said Eleanor icily, "I do not in the least understand you. I hardly know you, and——"

"Oh, but you *do* understand me; you must—you shall!" cried Miss Williston, and Eleanor saw that she was flushed, and that her eyes shone like stars. "Listen to me! I have—oh, Miss Gray, when I think of how little it would mean to me and how much to you! Please, *please* do it! Just

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think, only five hundred dollars! I have two thousand dollars a year. I am ashamed of it, truly I am, but I have it for what I please—just exactly what I please. No, you sha'n't get up yet. See, see how it is with me! All my four years here, what have I done? Nothing. I've got through well enough, but that's all. I've made some friends, but not many. The only two girls I ever really loved here were very poor, and they were awfully proud, and they were afraid that because I was the richest girl in college—oh, it was dreadful! And I shall go and leave nothing behind me—nothing! If I could feel that I had given you to your class—to the college—for a year, I should be so happy! I should even think that I was of some use! Oh, let me! Let me feel that I've really done something!”

Eleanor looked at her curiously. She was almost in tears. Her hands held Eleanor's tightly, and she was evidently deeply in earnest.

“It would mean so little to me—so little!” she begged. “And yet it would be

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so much for the class! And they would never know—never would know; but *I* should know, and I should know that I'd done something for them, and that I wasn't just one of those poor useless girls that drift into college and then drift out again, and don't count—either way!"

Eleanor felt strangely touched. "Why, how you care!" she said, wonderingly, "how you care!"

Miss Williston drew a long tremulous breath. "Care!" she cried, "you don't know how we care, we poor mediocre ones! Do you think that because we couldn't write a poem to save our lives, and can't make original remarks in class, and are never proposed for office, and don't, for the best of reasons, edit the Monthly, that we don't want to do these things? Oh, if I could only have my father hear the things said about me that are said of you every day! If I could only feel that I was to the class what you are!"

"The class don't like me," said Eleanor abruptly.

"They admire you, and if you wanted

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to, you could be liked very, very much indeed," said Miss Williston. "I always thought that you didn't care to have us like you!"

There was a pause. The girls were drifting back to the houses, one by one. The stars were well out, and Miss Williston's face seemed white, now, in their light.

"Do you really care for the things they say about one here?" asked Eleanor.

"Care?" said Miss Williston again, "of course I care. So do you. But you don't need them. You're sure of them. You know what you can do. And through you I can do the only thing I ever could do—and I go in June. Oh, Miss Gray, only five hundred dollars! I could put it in the bank to your account, and that would be the end of it. And you could pay me back whenever you pleased, if you wanted to. For I suppose you wouldn't let me——"

"No," said Eleanor, "I wouldn't. An hour ago I should have said that the whole thing was impossible."

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"But now?" said Miss Williston quickly, "but now?"

"But now," said Eleanor, slowly, "now—oh, never say again that you are one of the 'mediocre ones!' No one who can make so disagreeable and proud a girl as I accept a kindness from a stranger as gratefully as I do from you——"

But she did not finish, for Miss Williston leaned toward her and kissed her.

"I thank you," she said, simply, "now I can hold up my head again. I have done something for my college! I am something more than 'Clara Williston, that well-dressed girl!'" And before Eleanor could reply, she had slipped away.

Eleanor lay back in the hammock and looked at the stars. A strange peace came to her, and she realized for the first time how unhappy she had been. Slowly the great bell struck eight. The lights came up in the great shadowy buildings. Only the seniors and a few lazy under-class girls filled the hammocks around her. "I live here! This is where I belong!" she thought happily, and smiled to herself.

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A year more to work and plan and get ready in! A year more in the place she—yes, the place she loved! Across the campus came a row of seniors, arms twined about each other, eight abreast.

Where, oh, where are the grave old seniors?

Where, oh, where are the grave old seniors?

Where, oh, where are the grave old seniors?

Safe, now, in the wide, wide world!

There was a sad little ring to the old tune, and Eleanor wondered if they were sorry.

Safe, now, in the wide, wide world!

“That doesn’t mean me,” she said, happily, to the hammock pillows, “that doesn’t mean me!”

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MRS. WESTON followed her husband to the end of the piazza and sat down by the arm of the chair dedicated to his after-dinner cigar.

"I'd like to talk a little about Barbara," she began with a small sigh. Mr. Weston chuckled softly.

"Barbara again? So soon?" he said. "Well, what is it now? Does she want the dining-room painted pea-green? Am I requested to smoke a hookah, like Alice's caterpillar, and shun anything so ordinary as a cigar?"

"Not exactly that," and Mrs. Weston smiled faintly. "It seems amusing to you, Horace, but I assure you if you lived under a running fire of that child's comment and criticism you would take it more seriously. She wants the parlor done over again to imitate a Japanese tea-room—she will use it for a studio then, she says. She

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assures me that a 'parlor' is provincial and inartistic to the last degree. She says that it is 'horribly conventional,' and that everybody comes right into the sitting-room anyway—which is true enough, for that matter—and that every room in the house should be in constant use and show it. The idea, Horace! Parasols and dragons and bamboo portières she wants, and then it will be different, she says!"

"Well, my dear, you can't deny that it would," and Mr. Weston laughed outright. "Why won't the attic do any longer?"

"That's what worries me, Horace, because she's so determined this time. She says that the attic was just a play-room for her while she was a child, to practise her childish ideas in. Every square inch of the wall is covered with pictures and the matting is old. She thinks it's undignified for her to go up two flights every time she wants anything; she's almost eighteen now and the only daughter, and if we treat her seriously we'll give her the parlor. Now, Horace, do you think I ought to do it?"

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"No, no, dear; certainly not! I'll talk to her. When Roberta has gone——"

"Oh, Roberta! I don't want to be rude to your cousin, Horace, but I must say——"

"There, now, Madam, I have you! Who said by all means *not* to invite her? Who admitted that she was flighty and irresponsible and the worst thing for Bab? And who insisted——"

"I know, Horace, I know! But it seemed so inhospitable, and I hadn't an idea she'd be so silly."

"Silly? My dear Elsie, the silliness of Roberta Weston has yet to be measured! When a woman of twenty-eight insists on being called 'Bobbie'——"

"There's another thing, Horace! I almost wish we had been willing to call Barbara 'Phyllis,' as she wanted us to, for then she'd have been satisfied, perhaps, and now *what* do you think Roberta calls her?"

"What?"

"'Ritchie!'—because her middle name is Richardson. Oh, Horace, boys are *so* much easier!"

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Up in the despised attic on a couch whose denim cover was embroidered with the autographs of her friends, sat Barbara, her arm about her new friend's waist. Cousin Roberta was attired in a fascinating Japanese kimono that trailed behind her. Her hands were covered with quaint rings, her hair was elaborately curled, her slippers brass-buckled and high-heeled. If the gown were not so fresh as it might have been, the rings more noticeable for their oddity than their intrinsic value, the slippers exaggerated in style, none of these things occurred to Barbara. With her gray wide-opened eyes fixed adoringly upon her cousin's face—the privilege of calling such a woman “Bobbie!”—and her fingers absently twisting the loose locks over her temples—Barbara regretted bitterly the youthful appearance those floating, almost yellow locks inflicted upon her—the object of many family councils confided her own difficulties.

“If Father would only take the matter seriously!” she said, regretfully; “but he won't! He just laughs and says, ‘Well,

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well! are we so far behind the times as that? Dear me, dear me!"

"Oh, Cousin Horace was always just like that," agreed Roberta, "just exactly. He never would be serious. He never will take the slightest risk, never go into any new scheme unless he knows the pedigree of everybody connected with it and sees just how it's going to come out. Now, that's not reasonable, you know, Ritchie. You have to take risks in business if you want to make any success. Why, I know men in Wall Street that stand to lose thousands every day—thousands! They just take the chances. They may come out beggars or they may come out millionnaires—they don't know. Cousin Horace is too conservative. There's no excitement in life if you know all about it beforehand. Why, to tell you the truth, my dear, I've more than once gone home to my little den—and there's been nothing for dinner there!"

"No!" sighed Barbara, excitedly, "you don't mean it, Cous—Bobbie! What *did* you do?"

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"Why, something turned up every time! Somebody came in and asked me out, or there was a check waiting for me from some article that I'd forgotten I'd written, or somebody brought some cheese in to make a rabbit. Oh, if you trust to things happening, they will!"

Barbara drew a long breath of relief.

"That's just the way I'd love—perfectly love to live!" she announced, eagerly. "It's so artistic and informal and jolly, and so individual too. You have a chance to live your life as you want to, not as your relatives want to."

"In short," said Cousin Roberta, comprehensively, "it's Bohemian!"

Barbara smiled with satisfaction.

"That's it—that's just it!" she agreed. "Now, here, it's all just the way it always has been. Sleep in the bed-room, eat in the dining-room, read in the study. If I want to make some little thing in the parlor with the chafing-dish, you know, Mother says it's absurd, with the dining-room across the hall and the gas-range in the kitchen, and the risk of grease on the rugs! If I get

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all my things together and plan to have a little study and studio and everything combined in my room, why, Father sits right down on that. He says it's unwholesome—a bedroom is meant to sleep in, and the air should be kept fresh, and isn't the house big enough for me? If I want something besides those deadly old engravings in the study, and bring down my Gibson pictures and a poster or two and my Jap umbrella, why, there it is again!—'A sense of the fitness of things, my dear, is surely one of the first requisites of the artist.' He says the study would give him the nightmare every night with those unholy objects scattered about.

"I admit that they looked ridiculous there," added Bab, honestly, "but whose fault was that? Not the fault of the things, surely. It was the other things in the study that threw them out."

"What I have always said about Cousin Horace, that I say to-day," Cousin Roberta declared solemnly. "A fine man, but Philistine to the core!"

"Y—yes," murmured Bab, undecidedly,

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worried by the "Philistine," but consoled by the "fine man."

"Now, Cousin Elsie," continued Roberta reflectively, "doesn't approve of me one bit—I see it plainly. And I know why. She knows how I detest housework and managing and planning ahead. I want to spend my money for *personal* things, artistic things, not washtubs and soup-tureens. The care of a house would drive me wild; those little tiresome, endless details I have no sympathy with. But Cousin Elsie loves them, I do believe. Now, you, Ritchie, sympathize with me. You have my temperament. If you wanted to come down with me when I go, I'd like to have you stay a week or so. Could you?"

"Oh, Cousin Roberta, I should love to! Do you really mean it? Really?"

Barbara was in ecstasy at the very prospect, but suddenly her face fell.

"They'd never let me, never!" she said gloomily.

"I suppose not," Bobbie agreed. "Of course, you know, New York isn't anything in the summer. No one's in town,

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they say; and yet I'm not so sure about that, after all. Every year more people find out that you can have a good time there, if you know how. And then, anyway," she added philosophically, "if you can't afford to leave, you can't, so you'd better enjoy it!"

"Oh, I should enjoy it!" sighed Barbara, twisting her love-lock tighter than ever; "but I don't believe they'll ever let me," and she went out to get ready for dinner.

Cousin Roberta was not one to let the grass grow under her feet, as she herself expressed it, and she brought Bab's heart into her mouth by remarking casually between dinner and dessert:

"Oh, by the way, Cousin Horace, what do you say to lending Ritchie to me for a week? I'd try to keep her from being homesick, and if she wants to see how artists live, I can show her a few."

Barbara dared not look at her mother's face, but she watched her father through her lashes.

"Artists? Artists?" repeated Mr. Wes-

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ton, composedly ladling whipped cream over his jelly. "I had no idea that Bab was going in for art too. Are you determined to conquer along every line, then, my dear? Shall we have a symphony soon?"

"Oh, Cousin Horace, you are too bad!" protested Roberta. "Of course I know that literature is Ritchie's line, but when I say 'artist,' I mean all that, you know. Why should painters appropriate that name any more than the rest of us? Art is broad."

"It is, indeed," responded Cousin Horace gravely; "and so that I know what you mean, Roberta, it's all right. About Bab, if she'd like to go and you'd like to have her, I can see no objection, I'm sure. I think that a week, seeing that it's August, would be enough for her, as she's not used to the city at that time."

Barbara could hardly trust her hearing. Was it possible that her mother approved of this? At any rate, she made no comment whatever, and the meal proceeded quietly.

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For the next two days Barbara packed her trunk violently, stocking it with pens and paper enough to last a season, and privately hoping that the week might extend to two, laying in twice as much clothing as her mother advised. Roberta, who was on her vacation, reclined upon the couch and talked lazily of fascinating little suppers after the theatre, newspaper conferences with well-known people, endless tickets to the *matinée*—she had a cousin in the box-office—and amusing interviews with celebrities, for she had not entirely given up this work, though her “chief” had long ago given her the responsibility of filling a column of “fashionable suggestions” every other day. To Barbara the mere word *journalism* flung wide open numberless, if vague, possibilities; she was not quite sure what it included—Roberta seemed to do so many things—but then, as she had said, art was broad.

Bab was not at all sure that she would enjoy “interviewing;” it seemed a small sort of business, somehow, to demand information concerning a person from the

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person himself—suppose he didn't want to give it? And it was so directly opposed to her old nurse's maxim, earnestly impressed upon her at a very early age:

*Never peek,
Never pry,
Never ask the reason why!*

But anyone so clever as Bobbie must surely know about this, and Bobbie found it very interesting and stimulating. And, anyway, one needn't begin with journalism, although it was quite the fashion now, Roberta assured her. One could "get into the magazines"—if the magazines wanted one! Bab hoped they would want her.

The weather had been exquisitely fresh and cool for August, and as she and Cousin Roberta walked across the city in the late afternoon, a little damp breeze blowing up behind them, Bab wondered at the necessity for fresh-air fund subscriptions. Surely no poor little children could die of heat in these clean cool streets!

Roberta had sent ahead to her chum to announce her arrival, and as they stepped

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out of the elevator into the dark little hall an appetizing odor of Welsh rabbit floated to meet them. Roberta pushed open one of four doors and swung into a small, rather crowded room, Bab close at her heels.

Her visitor gave a little cry of pleasure.

"Oh, Bobbie, isn't this too cunning!" she exclaimed. Roberta nodded carelessly.

"It's a decent little hole," she said. "How's everything, Baby?"

"Baby" was a little plump blonde creation with big blue eyes and a very practical little mouth. She might have been eighteen or twenty-eight—it was impossible to tell. Over a dainty silk evening-waist she wore a splashed and spattered painting-apron, and as she acknowledged her introduction to Barbara she continued to stir busily over the chafing-dish. The walls of the room were crowded with photographs and posters, pen-and-ink sketches, bits of crockery, bas-reliefs, looped fish-nets, and two or three bright Japanese lanterns. One of these latter was inverted over a high lamp for a shade, and gave a quaint, mellow light that softened the mingled color-

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ing of the gay little room. What was apparently a book-shelf was curtained over at the lower half, and the preparations for the coming supper showed that it was in reality a store and china closet. The bottom part of a little ladies' desk was concealed by another curtain, and that, too, proved to be a cupboard. Fresh rolls and butter were brought in by the janitor's little boy, a bottle of olives and a jar of devilled chicken came from under the desk, chocolate was boiling in a second chafing-dish; and when Roberta had spread an embroidered tray-cloth over the little heart-shaped tea-table and put a tiny green plant in the centre, the jolly supper was ready.

Barbara ate in happy silence, delighting in the unmatched china and tiny souvenir spoons with twisted handles, laughing merrily at the "company cup"—the only unbroken one—they gave her, and listening greedily to the rapid chatter of Baby, who had suffered many misfortunes that day, having foolishly bought a salmon-colored velvet stock by daylight intending it for evening wear—"and it looks absolutely

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ghastly, Bobbie, a hideous flesh-color with no lights in it!" Also the model had felt sick and refused to pose any longer, and they had put in one she detested. And her neighbor in the life-class had joggled her and ruined her skyline, and made her too nervous to get it right again.

"Jimmie sent tickets for you and Miss Weston," she added. "I'm going with the Doctor. Dee Dee's on a case."

"Dee Dee's the third of us," explained Roberta. "She's a trained nurse, and ought to be on a vacation, poor dear, for she's worked to death, but they won't let her alone. She's engaged, and when she can't go anywhere suddenly—they call her up at twenty minutes' notice—Baby gets the ticket that her devoted fiancé purchased for her. But we'll all go together."

After supper Roberta and Barbara went into the second room to change their shirt-waists for something better befitting a theatre invitation. Roberta and Miss Du Long—for Baby had a more dignified name—shared it as a bedroom, and there was literally no corner for Bab's trunk.



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"But we'll put it in Dee Dee's room," said Roberta, comfortably.

"Oh!" protested Bab, "but would Miss Dee—I don't like to——"

"Deane," explained Roberta, "Delia Deane. Yes, indeed—and where *would* you put it, Ritchie? Do you want to sit and hold it? Dear me, Dee Dee's used to that! She's out so much, you see, on her cases, and we pack things in here a lot. Once I had somebody staying here overnight—I didn't know her very well, either—and Dee Dee came home unexpectedly and found her in the bed. She hadn't met her at all. It was too rich!"

Barbara stared widely.

"Why, Bobbie, how dreadful!" she gasped; "what did Miss Deane do?"

"Oh, that was the funniest part of it," replied Roberta, heating her curling-irons over the gas, "the very funniest. You know Dee Dee's terribly strong—strong as a horse. And she's tall and big, too. She thought Baby and I had had a quarrel and one of us had come in here, and she just picked my friend up like a baby and had

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her in the parlor before she knew what was happening! You should have seen their faces! It was the funniest thing I ever saw."

"Now, see here, Bobbie," interrupted Miss Du Long, suddenly, "if you think that because you have company, all you have to do is to curl your hair and get dressed, you're mistaken! I've cleared up, but you'll have to come and wipe the things at least! I've hardly sat down to-day."

Roberta laughed good-naturedly and went out, half-dressed as she was, to wipe the little cups and plates, pinning up her hair as she went. Bab slipped into the fourth and last room of the tiny series—a cunning little bath-room, with a luxurious porcelain tub and shining nickel fittings—to pause in dismay on the threshold. Kneeling before the tub was Miss Du Long, *washing dishes in it*, while Bobbie, bare-armed and with half-arranged hair, sat composedly on the edge, wiping them for her friend. On the one chair of which the limited area admitted were piled the re-

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mains of the feast, in perilous proximity to the soap and towels that filled the intermediate spaces.

"We'll be through in a minute," called Baby, cheerily, "we're dreadfully fussy now about getting 'em done up right away; we used to leave 'em meal after meal, because Bobbie wasn't in the mood for it, and they piled up hideously. We *never* got through, then. But now we're just as proper and regular!"

Bab shook herself together: why shouldn't they wash them there? They certainly couldn't bring a dish-pan into the parlor very well. And the tub was porcelain—it was really a charming way, when you came to think of it. But she was glad to find the traces removed when she entered the dear little bath-room again.

Presently the Doctor came, a frank, pleasant, boyish man, who fretted and fumed in pretended rage at the supper-menu.

"Never putting anything decent into your stomachs from morning till night!" he declared, "nothing but messes and

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slops! I vow you shall eat beefsteak to-night!"

Then they started out for the theatre, walking all the way, both because the night was fine and the Doctor wanted the exercise, and because they wanted Barbara to see the streets.

She walked along by Cousin Roberta, her head whirling with anticipation and excitement. The long lines of lights, the glowing windows, the indescribable city odors, cigar-smoke and whiffs from the druggists' and barbers' shops, the thronging changing crowds, the well-dressed men, the women, so utterly different from the passing women at home, the shrieking newsboys and clanging trolley-gongs, with the rumble of the elevated cars—all this, with herself a part of it, filled her with a delicious confusion.

In the lobby they parted.

"Baby and the Doctor are too swell for us—they've seats in the orchestra," said Roberta, lightly, "we're going upstairs."

Bab watched the two walking down the aisle: the Doctor handsome and well set-

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up in his evening clothes; Baby's curly yellow hair rising most effectively from an exquisite blending of turquoise-blue velvet and chiffon; and smiled at the thought of those little white-gloved hands cleaning chafing-dishes in a bath-tub!

She felt almost ashamed of her simple tucked blouse—it looked so plain and babyish. She longed for a jet-trimmed black satin waist like Roberta's, and did not know that her mother's unerring taste had produced, with the soft shirred gray silk and the deep collar of quaint yellowish lace, an effect that not only won Roberta's instant admiration, but caused more than one pair of eyes to follow the slender graceful figure, like some artist's "portrait of a lady."

The play was a popular light extravaganza, with much spectacular effect, and from the first tap of the leader's baton to the drop of the curtain, Bab never lost a second of the performance. Between the last two acts there was a long wait, and Baby and her escort joined them for a little chat, while Roberta went to find some

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friend of journalistic fame, that Bab might meet in the flesh a woman whose name she had so often read at the foot of her witty columns. Everyone treated her with consideration, nobody inferred by tone or glance that she was not yet eighteen; she was on a perfect equality, apparently, with this brilliant, well-poised metropolitan crowd; she longed for her father to see her now!

And after the play came the crown of all. With the brilliant finale ringing through her head, they went out into the bright, late night streets and found a white little table in a merry crowded restaurant. A band played somewhere; white-vested waiters glided about assiduously; the clink of glasses and silver, the murmur of voices broken by the occasional bright, high laugh of a woman, sounded everywhere; delicious rich dishes passed by them on heavily-loaded trays.

The Doctor sternly insisted on beef-steak, and they ate it laughingly, with little glasses of light sweet wine; Bab felt like some woman in a story. The waiter served

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her as obsequiously as if she had been a princess, the long rolls of bread tasted like no other bread in the world, the band behind the palms played enchanted music.

Then home through the streets, grown darker and quieter, but still alive, and up into the little parlor. They scurried about and pulled the cushions from the narrow couch in the corner under the Japanese lanterns.

"We haven't got blankets enough, really, Ritchie," Roberta explained, "but here's the couch-cover if you're cold, which you're not likely to be. The last extra pillow-case was torn, and Dee Dee dusted with it last week; but you can sleep on a blue denim or a yellow satin or a burnt-leather cushion—will that do?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Bobbie dear, anything!" murmured Bab, her mind a mixture of little glasses, fancy dances, white shirt-fronts, and perfumed evening dresses.

"Sleep as late as you like, you know—you've nothing to do," added Roberta. "Good-night!"

Barbara was asleep in ten minutes, but

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not before she had registered a vow to be either a journalist, an artist, or a trained nurse, and live forever in New York.

She was awakened by a querulous voice and a clatter of plates.

"Dear, dear, Bobbie, that boy hasn't brought the rolls! Isn't that maddening?"

"I don't care if he hasn't—I don't want a thing but the coffee."

Slowly Barbara's eyes unclosed. She gazed in a vague wonder at the lanterns and casts, which looked coarser, somehow, in the brighter light. Her head ached a little, and she remembered that, having no brush in the parlor, she had left her hair tumbled about her face instead of braiding it in its usual neat strands. She felt hot from the Bagdad couch-cover, and the air in the room was not so fresh as it might have been.

"Ready for your coffee?" and Roberta appeared, languidly trailing the kimono behind her.

Barbara looked about for the breakfast, but there was no sign of any preparation for it. Somewhere from the direction of

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the bath-room came the odor of coffee, but that was all.

She got up and started for her bath, but Roberta anticipated her.

"You'll have to wait, Ritchie, I'm afraid, till Baby gets the coffee done, and then you'd better take your coffee hot," she said. "Here she is," and Miss Du Long appeared with a cup of coffee in either hand, a dressing-gown flung around her shoulders, and her golden hair in a mussy plait.

They seemed to expect her to drink it as she was, so she sank back on the yellow-satin cushion and wondered where the rest of the meal was hidden.

"The rolls didn't come," remarked Baby, "have a saltine?"

"No, I thank you," returned Bab.

"Some marmalade?" queried Roberta.

"I think not, thank you," and she watched Miss Du Long eat crackers between sips of filtered coffee and wondered if Roberta really thought that a cup of that liquid constituted a breakfast.

Evidently she did, for with a glance at

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the little clock, she laid down her cup and hastened off to dress.

"I'm on duty at eight-thirty to-day, Ritchie," she explained, "and the Babe always gets away by nine. Now I'm treating you just as you'd like, I know, and leaving you to yourself—the house is yours. I'll be back at noon to take you to lunch. Stroll about, if you want—New York's as simple as tit-tat-toe, you know; avenues up and down, streets across. I wouldn't go much below Fourteenth Street—from there to Twenty-third's the shopping. Ask the way anywhere."

Bab hardly knew how she felt. Of course Roberta could not entertain her; of course she was a busy woman—she had not expected it. But this matter-of-fact desertion startled her a little, nevertheless. She felt sleepy as well as hungry, and half unconsciously fell back on the pillows. Half-past twelve was not her usual bed-time.

When she opened her eyes again, Roberta and her friend were gone. Her curiosity awoke, and she examined the three little rooms more closely. They showed

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better by lamplight. The casts were cheap, the hangings dusty, the furniture rather crowded for comfort.

Still, when she had had her bath and aired the parlor she felt better. She made up the couch, and observing that Miss Deane's bed was unmade—she must have come in late and gone out early, Bab decided—made that, too, and would have carried her good intentions farther, had not the third room presented such a hopeless chaos of clothes, cups, sketches, old letters, and tumbled bedding that she shrank from interfering. A picture of white-aproned Minnie deftly setting her room in order flashed into her mind, but she dismissed it instantly. One could not have everything, of course.

She did not quite dare to essay the unfamiliar city just then, and roamed about the little parlor, fingering the few books and magazines, admiring the presentation copies of works she had never heard of before by authors as unknown, longing secretly for lunch-time. She had respected Cousin Roberta for her abstemious Con-

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tinental breakfast at home, but had not been obliged to imitate her in that respect, and she wished increasingly as the hours went by for her share of the home breakfast: the orange, the dish of oatmeal with cream, the crisp bacon and golden eggs, and Hannah's muffins.

At twelve o'clock a loud knocking at the door woke her from a reverie. The janitor confronted her, an injured look on his sal-low face.

"He's been ringin' a long time out there," said he, "and he swore there was a young lady in. I said if there was, you'd have paid some attention to him. He give me this," and he handed Bab a note. A little flush of disappointment rose to her cheeks as she read:

"DEAR RITCHIE:

"Dreadfully rushed—can't possibly get home for lunch. Just go three streets down and two across—I mean two blocks to the left—and lunch at the Ladies' Dairy Lunch. Bring the bill to me, of course. I'll be up a little later, if I can.

"Hastily,

"BOBBIE."

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Partly from hunger, partly from weariness, the tears rose to Bab's eyes.

"Thank you," she said to the janitor, and turned away. It occurred to her as she hunted up her hat that she had literally never eaten a meal by herself in her life. And in a restaurant, too!

She went slowly down the stairs, wondering if she should have locked the doors, and ran into a tall large young woman jumping up two steps at a time.

"Oh! you're the little cousin!" said this young woman, cheerily. "I'm Miss Deane. Came back to get some clothes and the walk. Getting hot every minute, isn't it? Out to lunch?"

"I was—" Barbara began.

"Come back and lunch with me—got it right here!" interrupted Miss Deane, and Bab gladly turned back.

Dee Dee hustled about, opened a quart bottle of milk, poured it evenly into two bowls, and took out of its wrappings a little crusty brown loaf. This she broke in half and began crumbling her half into the milk.

"Best lunch in the world!" she said,

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fixing her steady brown eyes on Barbara, "better than canned stuff!"

Now, if there was one thing that Bab detested it was bread and milk. She choked down a few mouthfuls, however, and tried to listen to Dee Dee's prophecies about the weather. "If the sun sets red, that's the end of us," she declared. "This has been too good to be true."

She had washed the bowls and got down the stairs before Bab quite realized what she was doing.

Left alone, Barbara got out her pens and paper and tried to write. Here was a studio just to her mind, and the solitude she had so often besought. But Dee Dee's exit had made the rooms a little lonesome, and none of the plots or rhymes that flew about so thickly when she had other things to attend to, came to this devotee of the literary muse.

At five o'clock Roberta appeared, apologetic and weary with the heat.

"Did you get your lunch?—Oh, with Dee Dee—that's good. Then you didn't starve, I know. Dee's a great eater. I—

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I had too much lunch myself. Lobster always makes me sick on a hot day. I don't want to see another thing to eat!"

Barbara sighed. Cousin Roberta threw off her things and subsided into the kimono.

"Get any work done, Ritchie? I always liked a good long quiet day to scribble in. How you ever get anything done with two great boys pulling your hair and wanting their caps found all the time I can't see. Oh, goodness, but it's hot!"

Later on Baby appeared, warmer, if possible, than Roberta.

"Supper? Don't mention it to me! Send Patsy for a glass of iced tea—that's all I want—except a bath. And Mr. Belden said he might drop in to-night. Dee says not to use her room, for she's coming in early."

"Very well," returned Roberta, crossly, "then that means the bath-room for Ritchie and me, I suppose. The mending-girl's got to sit in our room, and that tiresome Belden makes my head ache. What you see in him, Baby——"

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But Miss Du Long was splashing in the tub, and Roberta relapsed into gloomy silence.

"I suppose you're hungry, Chicken?" she remarked, presently. "There's plenty of stuff here."

She opened a box of sardines, another of crackers, a jar of strawberry jam, and a package of Huyler's.

"Here you are," she said; "we won't really set the tea-table—the cloth got a stain on it last night, and we must keep it decent for Sunday. They all pile in Sunday afternoons."

But though she arranged the sardines and lemon attractively on the little plate, Bab could not eat them at first. They were just at the soup at home, and the roast beef would come later, with soft white potatoes, and corn on the ear, perhaps, and Hannah's peach ice-cream!

She was really very hungry, however, and disposed of half the sardines, a great deal of jam, and all the crackers, with frequent dips into the box of chocolates.

"Just leave the things there; I'll pick

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'em up later," Roberta said, but before she got about it the mending-woman came, and both friends jumped up hastily to rummage among their tangled possessions. Bab lay drowsily on the couch, meaning to clear the dishes away, but forgetting to do it. Suddenly a hand touched her shoulder.

"Excuse me, but I think that's Mr. Belden's ring," came Baby's light sweet voice, and Bab stumbled up and out into the hall.

"Here, come in here," whispered Roberta, drawing her into the bath-room. "That woman chatters enough to drive you into a madhouse, and Mr. Belden knows absolutely nothing but Titian and Raphael—he's dreadfully tiresome. We'd better sit in here."

Barbara sat down on the floor and leaned her head against the porcelain rim of the tub. Roberta, cushioned on a laundry-bag, wrote rapidly at her "copy."

"Better get a book or something: he stays forever," she advised, then bent her head again, and only the rustling of her paper was heard for some time.

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The evening seemed endless. Mr. Belden's voice chanted monotonously on, punctuated by Miss Du Long's laugh, Roberta's pen scratched busily, the room grew steadily hotter. It seemed that eternities had passed before she could stumble, stiff and sleepy, to the narrow couch with the yellow-satin pillow.

The lamp had smoked a little, and the sardines were still there, their oily odor mingled with the scent of the cigarette Mr. Belden had been permitted to light. She arranged the couch herself, for Baby had gone straight to bed and Roberta was too tired to do anything more than clear away the mending-woman's débris.

The night was long and hot. Bab dreamed of barrels of sardines, and woke with a hard headache, the clank and rattle of the heavy wagons that had travelled past all night still ringing in her ears.

With a determination to get a bath before the coffee-making began, she slipped into the bath-room ahead of the others.

"Could I have a clean towel, please, Bobbie?" she asked a minute later.

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Roberta's head emerged from her bedroom door.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, but the laundry isn't back," she explained. "Is yours gone? Well, just use mine, that's all—we haven't but seven between us just now—they're giving out."

It occurred to Bab for the first time that every household did not of necessity possess a roomy white towel-drawer, piled with linen and huckaback, flanked by Turkish towelling and wash-cloths, ready to the hand.

With compressed lips she fitted in the nickel stopper and turned the shiny faucet. Only a long sputtering sigh and a few drops of rusty-colored water came from the tube.

To her horrified appeal, Roberta answered disgustedly.

"There! I forgot all about it! Of course there isn't—it's all turned off. Do you hear, Baby? There's not a drop of water in the house. The janitor told me to fill the tub last night and the ice-cooler, for we sha'n't get any till eleven o'clock.

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There's a big leak in the pipes above us.
And your old Mr. Belden made me forget.
Now, where's the coffee?"

A wail from the disconsolate Baby was the only answer.

"No water to wash the dishes, either!" grumbled Roberta. "Let's go down to the Dairy Lunch, then, all of us!"

But even the dainty little breakfast served there came too late for Bab. Her headache increased momentarily; it seemed to her that she had not washed her face for a week.

Baby's invitation to visit the Art League she was forced to decline, and assured them that she only wanted to lie down and couldn't think of dinner, no matter where. Bobbie hurried her back, established her on the couch, told her to expect the water before noon, and promising to be back in a few hours, left her to her hot weary self.

Never, if she lives to be a hundred, as she assures herself, will Barbara forget that dreadful day. The city glowed and simmered in the heat: the buildings and pave-

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ments radiated it. Above her head someone played scales and five-finger exercises indefatigably; in the next apartment a baby cried beyond all power of comforting. The rooms were dusty and disordered, the sardines sickened her, the bed was hot, the sheets mussed and tumbled, the yellow cushion unspeakably irritating.

Sometimes she nearly drowsed, but then a hurdy-gurdy was sure to come and play the tunes she hated most. The lanterns grew more hideous with every hour, the crowded furniture stuffier and less in keeping.

At noon Miss Du Long came back with some fruit and lemonade, and while Barbara ate a little she entertained her to the best of her ability with tales from her "life-class." Suddenly she stopped short, and fixing her childish blue eyes on Bab's pale nervous face, she asked abruptly:

"Do you know where Bobbie's taking lunch?"

"No—how should I?" returned Bab, listlessly.

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"Well, it's the same place as yesterday and with the same person," said Baby, nodding sagaciously; "and it's a swell place, too, I can tell you! I thought Bobbie was keeping something from us—she always acts cross when she is—and now I know it. It's my belief, Miss Barbara, that Bobbie has met her fate! That's just the way Dee Dee acted; and if Roberta Weston doesn't have something to write home about soon, I'm mistaken. It's her chief at the office—he's a fine fellow too. Everybody likes him."

"Oh!" said Bab, falling back wearily on the yellow cushion, and that was all the comment she made. If anyone had told her three days ago that she would be in a position to watch the romance of her fascinating cousin, she would have held her breath with excitement, but it hardly caught her attention now. Somehow Roberta seemed far away from her. She realized that she did not, could not, know intimately this busy self-centred woman, so much older than she, so—so—yes, so different in her tastes and bringing up!

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She and Baby were worlds away from her little cousin; even Dee Dee was not very near.

Soon Baby was gone again, and the sun beat down with terrible force, the music-student renewed her practicing, the child next door wept mournfully. Miss Du Long had washed the dishes, but it seemed to Barbara that never while she lived could she eat a sardine again.

At five o'clock Roberta came, her hands full of flowers, her shirt-waist wilted, her hair uncurled with the heat.

"You poor, poor child! Now don't say you don't feel better, for we have the grand-es. scheme—we're going to have a sail in the harbor in a steam-launch and eat our supper there. We'll have Baby's banjo, and the Doctor sings beautifully—and you'll see what New Yorkers can do in the summer! Won't it be fun?"

Barbara shook her head.

"Go right along, Roberta, don't mind me, but I truly can't. I must just stay here—it aches too hard."

"Oh! I'm so sorry. Baby, can Mr.

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Belden come? What *do* you think they said in the office . . .”

Barbara hardly regretted it. There would be no place for her, really. They forgot her in a moment, she was sure.

She drank some beef-tea that Dee Dee brought her and consented to be carried in to her little bed for the night. A friend of Dee Dee's, a nurse, like her, was to come in to stay with her—and they were off before she had fairly said good-by.

Late in the hot heavy night her door opened and Roberta came in softly.

“Are you asleep, dear?” she asked.

“No, Bobbie.”

“Oh, Barbara, I'm so happy! I feel ashamed to have left you alone so, but then you couldn't come, you know. You *would* have enjoyed it so! I thought of what an experience it would have been for you. The sail was perfect and the supper was so good, and so many jolly clever people were there—just the sort you'd like to meet—regular Bohemians, you know!”

Bab shuddered a little under the sheet

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that shielded her from the multitudinous flies.

"And, Barbara dearest, all the girls know, so I think you ought to—I am engaged to be married! And I'm so happy! We're going to have the dearest little house in one of the suburbs—Dick hates a flat—and I'm not going to write much, but just take care of it. Won't that be sweet?"

"Yes, indeed, Roberta—I'm so glad," she murmured drowsily. It was not a great enthusiasm, but Roberta was not in a critical mood, and pressed a warm violet-scented kiss on her cousin's cheek.

"And we're going about, little by little, to buy the cunning things—spoons and tables and nutmeg-graters, you know!" she added, eagerly, "but I mustn't keep you awake, you poor dear—good-night!"

In the morning the thermometer approached foreboding heights, and Bab, after a consultation with Miss Deane, who set about packing her trunk forthwith, announced that she felt sure her head would never get better in all this heat.

"You know we get the breeze from the

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water, Cousin Roberta," she explained, "and it's always cooler there."

"The child's quite right," added Dee Dee, "she ought to get out of this."

"But she hasn't had a bit of a good time, except just one night," said Roberta, undecidedly, "and perhaps she'd feel better later. This afternoon we clean up—oh, no, I'm engaged for this afternoon—but we'll clean up to-morrow morning and get ready for a spread. Then in the evening the whole crowd comes around, and they each bring something, and we have a right nice time—rabbit and oysters and——"

"It would be very, very interesting," interrupted Bab, "but I really ought to go, Cousin Roberta. I know I ought not to stay here, feeling as I do. You see, you haven't any—any—it really isn't arranged for a sick person here."

"No, that's so," Miss Du Long assented. "Come again in the winter, when you're feeling all right."

Dee Dee had gone out to get her a cab, for she was not able to walk, and as she lay resting before the little journey, she

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caught snatches of the conversation in the bedroom.

“ Goodness, yes—she’s just like her father! Just that prim little air of decision! She gets her talent from him, though he makes fun of it to her face. Not that he isn’t proud of her.

“ —Write? Why, of course! You know he could have been in Dick’s place to-day, easily. You see, they all wrote. Cousin Will edits a big daily in Pittsburg, and Cousin Annie did some awfully clever things before she married. But Uncle Horace wanted one of the boys to carry on the business—it would break his heart to have it go out of the family, he said. And Cousin Horace was the youngest and his favorite. So he made him promise not to go in for literature like the others.

“ —Oh, I suppose it was a blow. But he felt the mills were a big responsibility, so he gave up his job on the paper and went back home. Stayed there ever since.

“ —So he told me. Says he has never regretted it. His mills are models for the State, I believe. But imagine giving up

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literature for that! He had a stunning style. He got me my place, really. But it's his fad never to mention it. He knows all the old set, though—Dick's head and all those older men."

Barbara hardly knew how she got through her good-byes. Her head was in a whirl. Write?—her father write? And how she had patronized him and sat at Roberta's feet—and he had got Roberta her place! Not that anyone could really patronize father; he made too much fun.

"A stunning style!" That was her father—Roberta admitted it!

How amused she had been at the quickness with which he had shuffled her papers into two piles—one big, one small.

"That," pointing to the big one, "doesn't strike me as particularly valuable. This one," with a hand on the little pile, "might be viewed by anyone but a fond parent in a different light. The shorter the sentence, the clearer the thought, as a rule. You forget that sometimes, eh?"

And he knew what he was talking about, it seemed! Her father! *A stunning style!*

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They were in the big bustling station. "Good-by, and come again when you feel better!"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Deane!"

The city was dropping behind. She leaned back against her drawing-room seat and watched the fields slip by. How cool they looked, how empty: no Japanese lanterns there! Nearer and nearer home—her pleasant quiet home. She grew stronger every minute, she thought, and leaving her trunk behind with the expressman, she walked up through the shady street. It was warm, oh, yes!—but a clean quiet warmth; the piazza plants expanded in it, the kittens in the corner basked in it.

How light and big the hall was, how still and neat the parlor and the study.

"Why, Miss Barb'ra! How soon you're back! Well, you look tired, and that's a fact! No, your mamma's gone for the day a-visitin', and your father he's took the boys out sailin'. Some luncheon? I should think you could! Minnie, you start the water in the tub, and after that you just get right inter bed, Miss Barb'ra, and Minnie'll

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bring it right up to you. Some good rich mutton broth with rice in it, now? We had mutton yist'day. And some scrambled eggs with parsley in 'em—that's light and nourishin', and a little dish o' peaches?"

"Yes, yes, Hannah—anything!"

Oh, the good full linen-drawer! The fresh cleanly bath-room!

And then, on the threshold of her bedroom, she wept a little tear of pure joy. How open and restful and clear-spaced it was! The pale-blue walls, the spotless white curtains, the creamy matting with blue-and-white jute rugs, the light graceful furniture of yellowish bird's-eye maple, the few pleasant pictures—all welcomed her to their calm coolness.

She slipped between the fresh sweet-smelling sheets and sniffed the lavendered linen pillows. What a blessing a real bed was! And four days ago she had wanted this taken into the attic, and a Bagdad-covered couch put in its place!

A little breeze swept in through the curtains; the lunch and the bath had made her drowsy.

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"I'll take a nap, I think, Minnie."

"Yes, Miss Barb'ra."

"And—oh, Minnie! just get that pile of papers out of the right-hand drawer of my desk—the big pile. Thank you. Yes, those are they. Just burn them in the kitchen fire, Minnie, and put that little pile in the pigeon-hole. And I'll get up for dinner, if you'll call me, Minnie."

"—No, I don't want to eat in bed, I want to eat with the family."

"—Did I? Well, I don't any more, then. I want to do just what they do. I'm a regular Philistine, Minnie—a regular Philistine!"

Her Stepmother

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Her Stepmother

HELENA turned the little blue envelope over in her hand, and studied the address curiously.

"This one is from Papa," pointing to a big white one in her lap, "but who would be writing from New York except him?"

Her Aunt Ellen looked up from her egg-cup with a strange little smile.

"I should open it and see," she advised, with the little air of reproof that always irritated her niece.

There is no denying it. Helena and her aunt did not get along very well together. To begin with, Aunt Ellen was a practical lady with slight sympathy for Helena's fads and fancies. She was not married, and her own young-girlhood was apparently too far away to have left her any memories of its needs or feelings. In the second place, Helena was rather spoiled by

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a father too loving to deny his little motherless daughter any pleasure. With an equally indulgent grandmother, her only source of discipline for fourteen years, it is perhaps no great wonder that Aunt Ellen found her, on Grandmother Hunt's death, not the easiest of wards. She thought her niece selfish and opinionated, and told her so. Helena complained to her busy father in the anxious intervals of his professional duties that Aunt Ellen was narrow-minded and disagreeable. He looked grave, and wondered what was to be done with this child already growing so tall and graceful—and the office-bell would ring, and he was off.

Two years they had lived together, and instead of smoothing over matters, as the doctor had hoped, the years had left Aunt Ellen and Helena more unsympathetic, more trying to each other, than at the beginning. To-day Helena felt that she had never seemed so dry, so prim, so utterly commonplace a relative. She considered with satisfaction a letter lying on her desk up-stairs addressed to her father, in which

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she had stated that this life was growing unbearable to her, and that, as he would not allow her to take the college preparatory course at the academy, she wanted him to consider very seriously sending Aunt Ellen home and giving up the house to his daughter, who was surely old enough to manage it by now. She wondered what he would say—dear worried Papa! For this spoiled little girl truly loved the father she was tormenting, though he would hardly have thought so had he watched her read her mail that morning.

She opened the blue envelope, and frowned a little.

“I don’t know who this is”—turning to the signature, *Alice E. Marsh*. “Who may she be?”

“My Dear Helena (for I cannot call you anything else): Your father mentions your name so often, I cannot let his letter go to you without this little note to accompany the photograph he insists that I shall send. I hope you will like it and me, too, a little—sometime. More than that I will not ask. I am not at all blind to the

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strangeness of the situation. I would have learned to know you more gradually if I could have done so safely, but your father's letter will show you that his slightest wish could not be denied at so critical——"

"What does it all mean? Who is Alice E. Marsh? Isn't this absurdly funny, Aunt Ellen? I don't see any photograph—do you suppose one came?"

Aunt Ellen looked relieved.

"I am glad to see you so amused, my dear," she said, nervously. "It will probably come in the next mail."

Helena stared at her. "What is the matter with you, Aunt Ellen?" she asked, quickly, "are you—do you—who is Alice E. Marsh?"

She did not understand her aunt's face.

"Why does Papa want me to have her picture?"

Aunt Ellen did not answer.

Helena tore open her father's letter, and, with a strange frightened thrill at her heart, began it:

"My Dear Little Daughter: You have

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been for so long motherless that I have had all your love. Can you spare some of it now for——”

And that was all of her father's letter that Helena ever read. Crushing it in her hand she turned very white, and faced her aunt.

“Aunt Ellen, is Papa going to marry another woman?” she demanded in a low voice.

“I—I believe he is, Helena.”

“Is that why I am to see her picture?”

“I suppose so, Helena.”

She walked over to the grate, and thrust both the letters in the fire. “I will never look at it, nor her either,” she said, coldly, and left the room.

She lay on her bed without knowing how she came there. She was too bitterly angry to cry. She had but one thought—her father's treachery to her. So this was what he had been doing in New York! This was why for two weeks he had written but twice, and then for two more only telegrams had come! And she had thought it was that course of medical lectures at

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Bellevue that was keeping him so terribly busy! He was tired of her: she was not enough for him, his own little daughter. And her mother—her real mother—what would she say? What would she feel if she knew?

It was hard for Helena to carry this train of thought farther, for she could not remember her mother at all. She had often tried, but the first image that her thoughts held was that of her grandmother, who had carried her from babyhood to girlhood, and to her she cried in her heart.

Dear Grandmother Hunt, with her comfortable lap and her kind smile, if she were only here to take her baby away from this dreadful place!

Who was this woman? When would she come? Could nothing be done—had she no rights? Could a step-mother be put over her without her consent? Must she obey her, a stranger? Would she change the house and send away the old servants, and take up all of Papa's time?—and then she began to cry. There is no doubt she felt deeply grieved, and so she

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was, but that was not all. Down in the bottom of her heart rankled pride, hurt, offended pride. That she had not been asked; that she had not been told, even; that she had not been enough! Like a child of two or three she had been overlooked—nobody cared what she thought.

Suddenly, like a flash, it came over her: had it been done for her? Was this person to be put over her to correct her and govern her? "She shall never do it," said the girl to herself. "If Papa has married a nurse for me—" and she set her white little teeth. The look on her tear-stained passionate face boded but little comfort to the woman whose kindly heart had prompted the little note.

Helena did not leave her room that night, and Aunt Ellen, with singular tact, did not disturb her. She cried and tossed till very exhaustion put her to sleep, and in the morning a hard headache kept her in bed. For a day she lay listless, and would not eat, and the next day, in direct defiance of Aunt Ellen, she dragged herself

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out and went in a heavy storm to the office to mail a letter. It was to Miss Alice E. Marsh, and was such a letter as only a spoiled, hurt, sick child, wounded in her strongest point—her pride—could have written. She came back with wet feet, and brooded over the fire till her shivering thoroughly frightened Aunt Ellen, who sent her peremptorily to bed. Helena went, stupidly wondering why she obeyed, and fell into a dull sleep. When she woke it was late in the morning, and she heard Aunt Ellen whispering loudly outside the door.

“James always said to get a trained nurse immediately in case of any fever—she had a high fever all night. I don’t know——”

“Does she know about her father’s—” This was another voice. Aunt Ellen interrupted:

“No, he wouldn’t have her told. He insisted. He may have told her in the letter, but she tore it up without reading it, and burned it. Will you see her?”

The door opened, and Dr. Hart came in.

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Helena opened her eyes and scowled at him.

"How foolish! I'm not sick at all," she remonstrated, as he sat down professionally by the bed. But he shook his head.

"These are pretty hot hands——"

"She has been troubled with school work lately," put in Aunt Ellen.

Helena flashed a quick glance at her.

"You know nothing whatever about it, Aunt Ellen," she said, decidedly.

Dr. Hart raised his eyebrows. "Come, come!" he thought, "this little girl wants a stronger hand!" But he only said that bed for a day or two would make it all right, and left a powder and went away.

As soon as she had heard the door slam Helena got up with what she intended for dignity, but what an unprejudiced observer might have mistaken for temper, and began to study her German. As she had locked the door of her room Aunt Ellen was helpless, and too proud to bicker with her. If Helena's fits of temper ever had any excuse she felt that there was one now, and let her alone.

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For three days the angry girl kept up, her cold growing steadily worse; but on the fourth her pride left her, and she lay hot and aching in her disordered room, a confessed invalid. Strange thoughts came to her: she lived over again much of her child life, her head was unsteady, and she slept without knowing where the dreams began. Her forehead was hot, her throat dry. Aunt Ellen was well-intentioned, but no nurse, and was deceived by the girl's quiet and drowsiness. Only when Helena called out one night for Grandmother Hunt was she alarmed, and when Dr. Hart looked grave and asked for her father's address, Aunt Ellen was utterly amazed.

"I thought she was getting on so well. I can't exactly say about James—his letters will be forwarded . . ."

Clearly there was little help in Aunt Ellen. The doctor sniffed angrily. "Is this the person to manage a high-spirited girl?" he thought, but he only said with a smile:

"I'll take the responsibility, then, Miss Ritch, and order a nurse up from the Belle-

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vue supply. Oh, no! nothing serious, only she wants great attention, and we don't want typhoid, you know. I'll send right down."

There was another day—a hot, tossing, aching day. Aunt Ellen potted about the room, asking what she had better do, and what Helena would like, till the girl cried with weakness and impatience. Though she had said not a word to her aunt about her father, and absolutely refused to continue the subject when it was introduced, yet Aunt Ellen's presence kept her trouble before her mind, and she went over and over the unhappy situation till her heart was breaking with pride and real sorrow—sorrow that she had not been able to fill his heart.

"Shall I bring up an egg, Helena? Do you want it boiled?"

"I never want to see a thing to eat! I wish you would go away!" she burst out, ungraciously. Aunt Ellen sighed.

"Feeling as you do, Helena, you will not regret that Dr. Hart has sent in for a nurse," she said in a martyred tone,

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and Helena, repentant, tried to answer kindly.

"Very well. It will be better, perhaps. I don't mean to be cross—" and she drifted off.

When she woke it was another day, though she did not know it. She had had a bad night, and felt very weak and irritable. In half-delirious dreams she had been hunted through the house by a cruel woman, who insulted her in every way, only to be justified by her father, who was terribly changed, and who would not kiss her, but waved her cold angry little note over her head and teased her with it.

She screamed and opened her eyes. But her scream was only a gasp, and did not catch the ear of the woman in the white cap and apron who was moving about the room. Helena watched her through half-shut eyes. This must be the nurse. She was quietly putting the disordered place to rights, and little by little the clothes disappeared, the glasses and cups melted away, the photographs were straightened, the rug shaken, the school-books piled on a table.

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Even the little silver toilet articles were laid in a polished row, and the faded violets were carried off. She came in again, and as Helena's eyes were closed, apparently, she went on with her work. A light fire was piled on the little hearth, and as the cheerful flames shot up, she opened both the windows, and for the first time in a week a great breath of fresh February air swept through the room. Yet again this comfort-bringer returned from a journey to the hall, carrying a thin glass bowl, with a handful of deep rich roses drooping over the sides. As she put it on the table her eyes met Helena's, and she smiled.

"How do you do? I'm the nurse, Miss Evans," she said pleasantly.

Helena looked curiously at the tall slender woman with the snowy cap and apron. She had deep brown eyes and a beautiful smile, an air of quiet power, too, that struck the girl from the first. She guessed her to be about thirty.

"Now that you are awake, Miss Ritch, I will make your bed," said the nurse in a

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matter-of-fact tone. Helena had expected a more elaborate greeting, some explanation of her presence, some polite expression of sympathy to rub off the embarrassment of their mutual strangeness, but the nurse seemed to feel no embarrassment whatever, no necessity for explanation of any kind. She moved toward the bed with a pile of clean linen in her hand and drew back the counterpane. Helena raised her arm, and caught at the corner of it.

"No, thank you," she said, brusquely. "This does very well. I am quite comfortable; I don't feel like getting up. Tomorrow, perhaps——"

"You will not need to get up at all," returned the other pleasantly, "and you will feel much more comfortable with the fresh things."

She loosened the counterpane from the foot and drew it off. Helena was just weak enough to be unreasonably irritated.

"I am the best judge of what will make me comfortable, I think," she said, crossly, "and I prefer to stay as I am," and she turned over, grasping the sheet.

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"My dear Miss Ritch, you are the worst judge in the world," said the nurse, easily but decidedly, "and I am here to judge for you. I am not a housemaid. I am a trained nurse, and whatever I do for you is the best thing, you may be sure. Give me the sheet, please!"

Half unconsciously Helena's hand slipped from the sheet. Never had she been so flatly corrected, so peremptorily ordered about. Yet it did not occur to her to resist. In a few moments she lay cool and clean from a quick skilful bath, among fresh sweet linen, meditating on the strange sense of pleasure that mingled with her confusion. This was an unusual kind of woman, truly. Perhaps all nurses were so. Perhaps she would learn to be a nurse and wear a white cap, and leave a hateful household—she was asleep.

For a week Helena saw only her nurse, and in that week she had already learned to admire her with the deep affectionate admiration that few girls have not at some time felt for an older woman. She found herself obeying without a murmur, submit-

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ting to correction with unheard-of docility, even confiding and asking advice now and then, when convalescence permitted longer conversations. Aunt Ellen she did not see, and did not ask for. She wondered if the nurse thought this strange, but Miss Evans never expressed the faintest curiosity as to her patient's family relations, nor, indeed, on any subject. Helena wondered if she had none. One day, when the remembrance of her great trouble came over her strong and hot, she turned on a sudden impulse to the nurse.

"Did Dr. Hart tell you why I was sick?" she asked.

"He said you were a delicate girl, and that the academy rushed the students too fast: I could draw my own conclusions," replied Miss Evans quietly.

"Did he say nothing of—of what had happened?"

"Nothing at all."

"I will tell you, then," said Helena quickly, with a mounting color. "My father is going to marry again!"

She sank back on the pillows, and burst

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into a storm of tears. For a few minutes there was no sound but the drip of the icicles outside the window and the girl's sobs. Finally she raised her head and looked at the nurse. Miss Evans was sewing, and did not stop the needle for a moment as she said:

"Is she such a very disagreeable woman as that?"

Helena stared.

"I don't know; I never saw her," she answered.

"Oh!" said the nurse.

Helena felt a trifle uneasy. Was she ashamed, she wondered? But no, of what should any girl be ashamed, in the way of grief and anger, who was treated as she had been?

"I—I—you don't seem to see. I am all my father has," she began.

"It seems, however, that you are not enough, if he is going to marry," returned Miss Evans calmly.

Helena gasped. There was absolutely nothing to say to such a brutal statement. She had tried to avoid telling herself just

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that, and now it was hurled at her from a stranger!

The nurse looked up from her sewing.

"Of course," she continued, "I can see, my dear, what cuts you, but I am sure you need not feel that you have failed just because you are not enough for your father. I know that when a girl has tried for so long to fill her mother's place, to anticipate every want of a tired overworked man, to interest herself in his affairs, to make his leisure hours, at least, amusing, to try, in a word, to be both daughter and——"

"Oh, stop!"

Helena was buried in pillows. She felt as if she had been plunged in an icy bath without any warning. Her head was in a whirl, her heart was beating to suffocation. Was this—was all this what a stranger took for granted? Had all this been her commonplace duty?

"And you are a delicate girl," added the nurse quietly, "and have not the strength for such a responsibility, with school duties into the bargain, and your own friendships and amusements."

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Helena writhed under the sheet. What had she ever considered except these: "Her own friendships and amusements and her school duties?"

She was too utterly stunned to cry, as in a flash of lightning she saw a picture she had never seen or dreamed of before. "A tired overworked man; interest herself in his affairs; make his leisure hours amusing—" That was her father! She had never thought of *him* as needing any help, any sympathy. She, the little motherless daughter, the baby, had been the one to be considered. Everyone had thought that——

"And believe me, I know just what it is to have been the confidant, the companion, the close friend of one's father, and then to see that place begin to be filled by someone else. But I wonder if the grief is not just a little selfish? After all, one wants the best for him just as one wanted it before—isn't it so?"

She stopped sewing, and had Helena been looking at her, she would have seen that the competent firm hands of her nurse

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were trembling a little. But Helena was not looking. Her eyes were buried in her pillow. She wished the sheet had been heavy enough to smother her out of sight forever. That last touch had been too much. "The confidant, the companion, the close friend!"

If any girl who had been all that felt selfish when she grieved at giving it up, what should she feel who had never been any of it? She was not fit to feel sorry, even. Dog in the manger—to refuse to give up a place she had never filled! She thought of her miserable little letter to Alice E. Marsh, and blushed to her neck. And this was perhaps to be the first comrade her poor lonely father had had for sixteen years!

"As for the hardest part of all, the fear that any stranger would think of trying to take one's mother's place, I think that is a mistake all girls make. I remember I was afraid of that."

Helena groaned. Nobody had ever taken such a place for her—she had not expected it.

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"But no woman would be so foolish," added the nurse, "to be a friend, a companion, an adviser——"

"Oh, if it were only you!" said Helena, and gasped a moment after. She had considered it! She had accepted it! She was even now wondering how she should efface that letter!

The nurse laughed a little. Her cheeks were as red as Helena's own.

"This photograph came for you a day or two ago," she said. "Will you have it on the bed?" Helena's hand trembled, but she held it out bravely.

"Yes, thank you, Miss Evans," and she broke the big yellow envelope. She hardly knew herself: she felt so humbled, so exhausted, so mean—and so glad, somehow, when she thought of her father. At least he was going to be loved properly, at last, by someone who was better able than she to do it, and show it.

"Before you open it," interrupted the nurse, "I want to tell you a story—may I?" With her hand on the girl's she went on, quickly:

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"I—I had a friend," she began, "a trained nurse like me. One of the lecturing physicians of her hospital was taken very suddenly and seriously ill with an influenza, which rapidly developed into pneumonia. She was given the case, and nursed him till he recovered. She—she admired him very much. Just before he started South for the few weeks of his convalescence he told her about his life, and his little daughter and her life. He asked her if she could give up nursing to come and live with him and his little daughter. He said he thought she could help them both. He—he greatly over-estimated the work of the nurse, and insisted that she had saved his life. Any nurse would, of course, have done the same thing. What interested the nurse greatly was that she had been left alone, too, and had found in her father's second wife her greatest friend. She hoped to be something of this to the girl, in whom she was greatly interested. Among other things she persuaded the girl's father that the life she would get at college—one of the dreams of the girl—

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would be a very good thing for her, and she told him that if the academy preparation was too hard, she would be more than glad to fit the girl herself—the nurse was a college woman.

“She found, however, that the girl did not like her, did not care to live with her——”

Helena tore the picture from the envelope. Below the white-capped figure with the lovely eyes were written the words *Alice Evans Marsh*.

“Is Papa better—well?” she cried, a sudden terror in her eyes. “Why was I not told?”

“He told you in a letter,” said the nurse. “Did you not read it?”

Helena blushed. “Is he well?” she repeated feverishly.

“He is quite well. He is coming in a few days. He has been to the South. He is coming to see if the nurse he sent to his daughter has accomplished what they both hoped she might. Because if she has not——”

“Ah,” said Helena softly, “if she had

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not, then his daughter would be even more of a pig—yes, a selfish pig—than she is.”

She kissed the photograph quickly. “You are much too pretty and good and clever for his daughter, though,” she said to the nurse in the picture, “she did not deserve you. She wrote you a nasty letter——”

“If I have forgotten it,” said the other, holding out her hands to Helena, “need you remember it, my dear?”

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“SO you think there's a story about it?”

said the Singer, tapping her adorer's cheek in a friendly way and looking out over the narrow country road rich with October red and yellow. Her adorer was sixteen or thereabouts, with great braids of auburn hair and a merry freckled face, at present brimming with admiration and joy. And why not? Had she not for three successive nights listened to the most wonderful music she had ever dreamed of? Was she not the delighted hostess of one of the greatest singers of the day? And, most of all, had not the Singer herself desired to hear her voice, pronounced it more than good, and promised to take her—her, Marion Winthrop—down to New York to her own old teacher to learn to sing “I Know that my Redeemer Liveth”? What

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more could any girl ask? "I almost know there is," she answered, shyly, touching old Peter lightly with the whip and turning him toward the wood-road.

"As soon as father heard you were coming, I thought you must have some reason for passing by Springfield and stopping in this little country town. And then, when father asked you to come here because the hotel is so bad, and the manager said you wanted rooms for a few days after the festival, I was sure you wanted to find out something—or remember something. And when the Springfield people wanted you to stay there, and you wouldn't consider it for a moment, but would rather stay with us, where you can't be entertained nearly so well——"

"I was never entertained more delightfully," said the Singer, softly. "Every walk, every drive, has been dearer to me than you can imagine. I have been dreaming of this visit ever since I came to this country. I have wanted to come here, to sing here, so much that I have been willing to work very hard to get all the others to

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come here with me. And think of all the people I have inconvenienced!"

Marion thought of all the crowds that had thronged the great pine-board auditorium, of the city people, the families from the little villages round about, and the visitors from Boston even, that had flooded the little town and added an excitement to its hum-drum quiet, and caught her breath. All for this woman! All because she preferred to sing here! They would come to hear her from anywhere, it seemed. And, remembering the great, solemn Mass, the wonderful oratorio, the anthems where the big chorus, the heavy orchestra, had seemed the merest background for this woman's magnificent voice, she did not blame them.

"You have been here before?" she asked, flicking a fly off old Peter's ear.

"I lived here eight years," said the Singer, "till I was sixteen years old, and went away to learn to sing. That was twelve years ago, and I have not been able to get back till now. I was a little lonely, timid child here; I suffered the great dis-

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appointment of my life here ; I found my great fortune here—and all by chance. And I live it all over again now.”

Marion dropped the reins on old Peter's back in her excitement, and begged the Singer with her gray eyes.

“ Would you really care to hear about it? It's not very exciting, and only strange in one place. But if you care enough——”

Marion's face was more than an answer, and the Singer smiled and dropped her big soft voice to a lower, intimate key that was in itself a delight. Old Peter fell into a walk undisciplined, and the story began.

“ When I was eight years old my father died, and the shock was too much for my mother, who had been an invalid ever since I was born. They were buried together in the little Minnesota town where we had always lived, and I was sent on, a quiet little black-dressed child, to Massachusetts, where Uncle Ezra and Aunt Susan lived. It was well that I had learned to live by myself and play softly, or I should never have been allowed to stay a week in the house that I was to grow up in. Uncle

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Ezra was a fussy, nervous little man who hated children. Aunt Susan had inherited the same delicacy and weak constitution that had kept my mother an invalid. An ordinary romping, growing little Westerner would have driven them both to a madhouse, I have no doubt. But I was used to musing away the mornings and dreaming through the afternoons, imagining myself in strange Arabian Nights' situations, reading what books I could lay my hands on, rambling about out-of-doors or through the quiet halls of a house that must not be disturbed by laugh or song or shout. There was a sister of my uncle's living in the next house, a faded, tired spinster, broken down by twenty years of school-teaching; and at her request, for she dreaded her enforced idleness, my education was given to her. She was a good drill-mistress, and for six years she dragged an uninterested pupil along the paths of knowledge, better perhaps than anyone else could have done. For her chief task was always to hold my wandering attention.

"One day, while she was explaining

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some arithmetical process or other and I was more than usually indifferent, she lost her temper and scolded me soundly.

“ ‘ You are a lazy, stupid girl,’ she cried, ‘ and at your age I could do twice as well as you. Besides all that you know I could sew neatly and play all my scales, and you don’t know one note from another ! ’

“ I never had a quick temper, and I didn’t mind her sharpness, so I merely straightened up and paid better attention. When the lesson was over, and she was somewhat mollified, ‘ What are scales, Miss Sarah ? ’ I asked.

“ She got out an old-fashioned ‘ First Book in Music,’ and gave me my first music lesson on an old wheezy melodeon, and that day my life began.

“ Stupid as I was at other things, I learned the notes very quickly. Much as I hated to study, I worked hard at my books to get time to practise. Indeed, my continual groanings and wheezings at the tuneless old organ quite wore on Miss Sarah’s nerves, and I was obliged to confine myself to using my new treasure but

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two hours in the day, and that not every day. So my practicing, unlike most children's, was a pleasure, a longed-for time, not an ungracious task. Moreover, if Miss Sarah had callers or a headache, and if I, for some reason, had offended her or failed in my lessons, I was denied even one hour of joy. Not to be utterly deprived, however, I confiscated a great pile of old music from a dusty shelf, and pretending that my bureau was the old melodeon, I would read this by the hour, humming the tunes unconsciously as I strummed on the wood and worked my knees on imaginary pedals.

"And now I have to tell you the strangest thing. A young reporter asked me a while ago, among other things, what my childish musical life had been.

" 'I had none,' I told him.

" 'But surely you sang from the cradle?' he remonstrated.

" 'My dear sir,' I answered, 'I never to my knowledge opened my mouth to sing a note till I was thirteen years old!'

"And that is the truth. It is impossible

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for you to realize what a quiet, suppressed, unnatural life I led. My mother was always on the verge of nervous prostration; my father was watching and guarding until she died, that not a shock or unexpected sound should come to her; we lived at the extreme edge of a tiny village, and saw not three guests in the month. Father taught me what little I knew. We never went to church, though I learned the catechism and a collect every Sunday, and mother thought the children of the village too rough for me to play with. So, as a simple matter of fact, I never heard anybody sing: I never knew it could be done. When Mother had an unusually good day Father would hum a little and take me for a walk, whistling sometimes. But that was all the music I heard. At Uncle Ezra's nobody sang, of course. We lived at the very end of the town, where the little chapel stands now, and the only house near enough to be called a neighbor's was the large house the Fresh Air Fund has used for two years, the keeper tells me. It was called the Edwards's place by everybody,

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then, and never occupied so far as I knew. It had, as now, magnificent grounds, with a great stone wall all around and a deep pond at the side of the house. It was enchanted land to me, and through a break in the gate I scrambled in almost every day to wander about and play my little lonely games.

“I had hummed over, as I said, sheets and sheets of simple, old-fashioned music, and unknown to myself, I had become a ready and fluent reader. Miss Sarah had taught me all she knew, and I had played all of her ‘pieces’ on the jerky little melodeon. It never occurred to me to try to find any more. We had no money to buy music; Aunt Sarah certainly had not. One day, to find the very last of the precious pile, I went down on my knees in the closet and dug out an old book of ballads. Aunt Sarah—I got to calling her Aunt in time—had never sung at all, and this book was not hers, but a friend’s. It was a friend of long ago, and the pages were yellowed by the mould of the damp closet. I took it up and saw the words printed above the staff,

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and the accompaniment of a few regular chords below them. Ridiculous as it may seem to you, I had never seen anything like that. Of course I had read of songs and of people who sung, but I always thought of it vaguely as a kind of recitation to music—a story told somewhat differently. So I tried to play the air and say the words. It was not a great success. I hummed the tune through, and then, by a sort of instinct, hummed the words softly. It gave me a queer little feeling of pleasure. I sang the verse again and then the others, growing very excited all the time. It never occurred to me to sing in any but the softest conversational voice—it would have annoyed Aunt Sarah. As it was, she soon told me to stop, and a headache prevented my playing for a day or two. But I did not care. I took the precious book home, and sang all the ballads through that night. Once when my voice rose above a soft humming, Uncle Ezra irritably called up to me to be still, and fearful of losing my new joy, I fled to the attic with a candle and hummed happily till very late. The

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next day, after lessons, I went up to the Edwards place and roamed about, singing contentedly as I went.

"That was out-of-doors, and I might perfectly well have shouted had I wished, but it never occurred to me to do so. In the first place, it might have called attention from some passer-by; in the next place, it never seemed necessary in the least. I thought it was a kind of musical reading, and my only thought was to make the idea plain, in the subdued fashion I had been brought up to.

"I had a happy summer with my music, but in the fall a sad thing happened: sad in itself, but tragic in its consequences as far as I was concerned. Aunt Sarah caught a heavy cold, which ran into pneumonia, and after a short sickness she died. I was very sorry, for I had spent a great deal of time with her, and though she was not a lovable woman, she had been the only real teacher I had ever had; and then, she had given me music! But my sorrow at her death was swallowed up in an agony of dread when I learned that

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her house was to be auctioned off, and her last possession sold to pay off a little mortgage.

“ ‘Have you anything of Aunt Sarah’s?’ asked Aunt Susan.

“ ‘Only a pile of music,’ I replied, hesitatingly.

“ ‘Bring it right over,’ she said.

“I don’t like to think about that time. It was terrible. I knew that Uncle Ezra could not afford to gratify my whim of buying the melodeon. I could not play it there. I went so far as to beg for the music, a thing I had never done before, but he had been obliged to pay part of the unexpected expense of Aunt Sarah’s sickness, and every dollar counted with him. I think if he had realized what it meant to me—but he could not see, and I was never a teaser. So they were sold, and I never saw the ballad-book again.

“For three months I dragged along, almost sick with loneliness. I was nearly fifteen, and I had no girl friend, no regular occupation but tending Aunt Susan, who grew weaker in the winter; no school-life,

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for I dreaded going among girls of my own age, and persuaded Uncle Ezra that I could study by myself; and what was worse, no hope for the future. I seemed to myself doomed to wait upon my aunt, and finally, when we were left alone, upon my uncle. And I did not grudge it, for I knew the debt I owed them, but I felt very sad and hopeless. I have felt sometimes that whatever good-fortune has befallen me since, it can never quite efface the bitter, lonely sadness of that time.

“But there came a change. One clear day, late in the winter, I was wandering about in the Edwards place when I spied an open side-door. Once or twice a month a caretaker aired the house and went over it, I had heard, and evidently she was there now. Some impulse led me up to the door and, before I knew it, I had slipped in. I walked softly through a deserted, dusty conservatory, a little sitting-room, a great wide hall, and stood in the long parlor. It was beautifully furnished in rich heavy brocades, with busts and pictures and bronzes and

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deep soft rugs, but I did not see them, for at the end of the room stood an open grand piano.

"I had never seen one in my life, but I knew, I knew! I rushed to it, and crying with excitement and unconsciously pedalling as if it had been a melodeon, I touched the dear keys and played my simple old songs. Then, when my excitement died away, I did the strangest thing that ever I did. I deliberately stopped playing, though I could have sat there for hours, and hid myself behind a heavy curtain. I waited there nearly an hour till the caretaker came, and watched her close the piano and put a cover on it, and lock the parlor door and go out by a side entrance. I heard the side door close, I heard the house door close, I heard, in the clear cold air, the outer gate slam. Then I deliberately came out and played my fill. How I had the courage I don't know, for I was a fairly timid girl, but my blood was up: it was my only chance.

"Beside the piano was a great set of shelves crowded with music. I feasted

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royally on it, playing what I could, humming the rest. There were several bound books of what the title-page said were oratorios. One called the 'Messiah' interested me, and I played what I could of it. I found soon, as I ran over it, what I thought then, what I think now, the most beautiful song in the world. When I first sang 'I Know that my Redeemer Liveth,' I probably murdered it horribly, but it has never affected me more deeply since. I cried and laughed at once. I wonder now that I did not sing out, but not only long usage, but the fear of discovery, kept my voice soft and low.

"When it was quite dark I opened a long French window and slipped out to the ground. I closed the window carefully and went home, the happiest girl in the world. To do me justice, I never for a moment thought of the danger to the property through the open window. I only knew that here was food for my starved soul, and I took this means of gratifying what was now the desire of my life. And then came a year of happiness. Impos-

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sible as it may seem, for one whole year I came for varying lengths of time, every day almost, to the Edwards place. It was not at all a popular place, for all its beauty. The walks to it were all bad, the times I chose were busy hours for working-people, and the idlers all congregated at the other end of the village. I found out when the caretaker came, and avoided her carefully. She was hardly to be blamed for not discovering the unlocked window, for there were heavy inside blinds behind heavy curtains, and I pulled them both before I shut the sash. I never once entered another room, or paid the slightest attention to the ornaments or furnishings of the parlor. I came for the music, and I took nothing else. I wonder to-day how I dared to do it, for I had a good conscience of my own, and despised anything underhand; but beyond the fact of my doing it secretly, which would in any other case have troubled me, I don't know that it was such a great sin, after all! The music was going to waste there—indeed, it was mostly yellow with age and the piano was in none too good

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tune, and I was literally pining away for it. So I took it, and hurt nobody.

“ I am growing too long, my dear, so I will skip any further description of my lonely happy year. I grew tall and strong and tended my uncle and aunt willingly, studying a little, too, though I am afraid not much, and revelling in music. There were stacks of it there, all good, and I devoured it all. There was a great deal of opera and oratorio and solo music generally, and though the instrumental scores were too difficult for the most part, yet I made some success with them, and I learned the vocal parts entire. I was quite contented and happy humming my little songs and learning new ones every day, and I fully believe I should have been doing it now had it not been that one day, as I was picking out a difficult aria from some Italian opera, I heard a sound, and, turning hastily, to my horror I saw a little old gentleman staring quizzically at me. I must have grown quite scarlet, for I have a thin skin and blush easily.

“ ‘ Oh ! ’ I cried, ‘ must I go ? ’ ”

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"Now, strange as it may seem, it was that idiotic question that saved me. Had I faltered or apologized or run away, I should never have returned in all probability. But so whimsical was the little gentleman that the sight of a young lady in a black gown, with a long tail of auburn hair, playing his piano and seeming rather vexed than ashamed at his coming, amused him greatly.

"'Why, no, you needn't go,' he said, with a chuckle. 'Do you come often?'

"'Every day, sir,' I answered, 'and—and it's all I want to do as long as I live!'

"'Well, well!' said he, dropping into a chair. 'Suppose you sing me something; do you happen to know a song I'm very fond of—"Allan Water"?' "

"Indeed I did: it was the first song in the ballad-book. I sang it in my usual soft tone, speaking the words very clearly. It was the first time I had ever sung to anyone in my life, and it gave me a delicious little thrill. I was not at all afraid.

"'Do you know "Barbara Allen"?' he said, when I had finished. That was the

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fourth song in the ballad-book, and I knew that backward. So I sang 'Barbara Allen.'

"'Mary of Argyle'?" said he. So I sang that, too. Then, all at once, I was telling him all about my life, and what a poor thing it had been till his music and his piano made it a contented one. He coughed and blew his nose a great deal, and patted me on the shoulder.

"'Come over to-morrow night and sing some more,' he said, and then before I knew it, he had shown me out of the great door.

"For some reason or other I did not tell Uncle Ezra; it seemed too sweet a secret. And perhaps, too, I had a sneaking fear he would be angry at my presumption. But the next afternoon I went to the window before I thought, and according to my habit, began to play. I remembered that I was not alone in the house, and turned to find the old gentleman in the doorway.

"Queerly enough, my very rudeness pleased him.

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“ ‘Well, fairy, did you fly in again?’ he chuckled. ‘Sing me “Allan Water”!’

“ ‘I sang it, and to my surprise, he turned away from me and asked, ‘How was it?’ A strange man lifted his head from a great high-backed chair I had not seen in the shadow, and came up to me.

“ ‘Sing out, my dear, sing out!’ he said, as easily as though we were old friends. ‘Why do you hold it in so?’

“ ‘I was too amazed to be frightened.

“ ‘Do you mean sing louder?’ I asked.

“ ‘Why, yes,’ he answered, looking at me curiously. ‘Sing as you ordinarily do.’

“ ‘But I always sing like this,’ said I.

“ ‘Do you mean that you never sang any louder than you were just singing?’ he asked incredulously.

“ ‘Certainly not,’ I replied. ‘Why should I? Couldn’t you hear the words?’

“ ‘Very well indeed,’ he answered, quickly, ‘but I want more tone. Suppose I were out-of-doors, how could I hear?’

“ ‘He came up to the piano and sat down. ‘What big piece do you know?’ he asked.

“ ‘I don’t know what possessed me, but

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I answered immediately, 'I know a song called, "I Know that my Redeemer Liveth." Shall I sing that?'

"'Oh, you do!' he exclaimed. 'Well, go ahead,' and he laid his fingers on the keys. I had expected to play the accompaniment myself. 'Do you know it?' I asked, doubtfully. He smiled.

"'I think I can manage it,' he said, pleasantly. Then he looked up at me. 'My dear,' he added, 'if you have any voice, show it to us. Sing till your throat hurts. Sing as loud as you can. Don't be frightened.'

"Then he began to play. I have often wondered that I had the strength to sing at all, after I heard that introduction. Remember, Aunt Sarah's melodeon instructions and my own feeble tinklings were all the music I had heard. And when that great rich body of tone rang out through the house, I was almost too entranced to open my mouth. He played very loud, and I realized hopelessly that I could never be heard against that—never!

"Then I set my teeth, and declared that

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they *should* hear me. It occurred to me suddenly that if necessary, I could scream. So I opened my mouth, and for the first time in my life, I sang with all my might.

"I cannot tell you the effect. I had never heard my voice before. It frightened me, it was enormous! It swelled and sank and rose. Oh, it could not possibly be mine! It shook my whole body; it echoed through the great house; it hurt my throat. I was frightened, I say, and yet I realized that I had never sung till now. Here I had been whispering these wonderful words, and they should be shouted through a trumpet!

"*'Yet in my flesh shall I see God!'* As I said that I thought the whole town must hear me and wonder.

"It was over. Like a girl in a dream, I saw his hands drop from the keys and his head turn to me. There was a deathly stillness. I had a sickening fear that they were angry, disgusted with me, that I had made too much noise. I had been shouting, not singing. The stranger rose and took my hand in his.

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“ ‘My dear young lady,’ he said, in a low but excited voice; ‘my dear young lady, would you like to become the first oratorio singer of this country?’

“ ‘I merely looked at him.

“ ‘Certainly, certainly,’ said the old gentleman, ‘of course she would!’

“ ‘Will you work hard for four years?’ the stranger went on.

“ ‘Still I was too dazed to answer.

“ ‘Of course she will,’ said the old gentleman again.

“ ‘Then come to me in New York as soon as possible,’ said the stranger, ‘and——’

“ ‘But I could bear no more. I was trembling from head to foot, and the room spun ‘round as I tried to take it all in. Who was he? What would I do in New York? Could I ever make so much noise again?’

“ ‘You are ill, child!’ said the stranger. ‘Sit down!’ and he led me to a deep chair. I sank into it, and collected myself enough to be taken home. Once there, I went directly to sleep, to my own amazement, and

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the last thing I heard was my aunt's surprised nervous voice as she welcomed the strangers apologetically, and thanked them for finding me.

"Well, that is all. It seemed that I was a singer. It seemed that I had an absolutely fresh untried voice, that my humming had been the best of practice, and my reading better. I had no old tricks to unlearn, and no strains nor faults to get over. The best teacher in the country to train me and good old Mr. Edwards to defray all expenses, as he insisted upon doing, and to make all plain to Uncle Ezra, who was hard to reconcile—was I not fortunate?

"And since then, it has all been so happy and successful: I have not deserved it! Hard work, and plenty of it, oh, yes! And journeyings here and there, not always as I have wished. But to give such pleasure by merely pleasing myself! To meet so many people when I had always been alone! Best of all, to put Uncle Ezra and Aunt Susan in a better climate, and make their last days comfortable!

"So I wanted to come here again and

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walk about the place. But the grounds are all changed, and the house, too. I suppose when dear old Mr. Edwards died, the property all changed hands. I owe him so much!"

The Singer sighed a little, and the story was over. Marion had dropped the reins, and old Peter had turned homeward of his own hungry will. Marion looked up in the Singer's face, with all the dreams of success and fame and work and travel softened in her gray eyes by tears for the lonely little girl she had grown to love from the hearing of the story.

"It was a beautiful story," she said, putting her sunburned hand on the Singer's white one, "and you were beautiful to tell it to me. I shall never forget it."

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"FATHER!"
"Well?"

"You're not going down for Harriet in that old wagon?"

"What's the matter with it? Why not? I thought I'd bring up some flour and some ice from the store," said Mr. Hoyt easily, turning to his pretty scowling daughter in the doorway.

She stared for a moment at his kindly sunburned face, and then shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"Oh, very well," she muttered angrily, "very well! I thought since we had a buckboard, new this spring——"

"But I couldn't get the ice into that, Sadie, and you wanted the ice," he explained, with a glance of pride meanwhile at the sleek handsome team pawing before the neat strong wagon shining from its

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weekly washing. Farmer Hoyt loved his horses, and they were good ones, too. "I don't believe a city girl will object to these fellows," he said, "and the trunks, you know, they'll take up room."

He whipped up and left her scowling in the doorway.

"It's no use," she said, hopelessly, "she'll see from the start what country folks we are!"

"Why shouldn't she, then?" called her mother from the kitchen.

"If you think for a moment, Sadie, that we can change all our ways for a girl of eighteen, and try to pretend that we're city people with six servants and a butler——"

But Sadie was on the piazza, unusually broad and pleasant for a farm-house, and was already deep in a novel. Mrs. Hoyt shook her head doubtfully.

"I hope Harriet won't put any more finicky notions into her—she's got too many now," she thought. "I wish we could afford a good school for her. Perhaps if Tom can sell the East Lot she could have a year or two."

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Tom was cheerfully humming in the green wagon, and the long-tailed chestnuts were racing gayly along the wood-road. He loved it, every bend of it, every glint of dappled sky through the branches. He never ceased to bless the day when nervous prostration drove him from the bustling heated city to live in the only place he could—the country. He brought his pale little boys and his sickly baby girl and began to make a new life for them all on the neat little farm he had put all his earnings into. And he had never had an unhappy day there. His father's blood was farming blood, and he carried on the old Vermont stock. He never envied William, who had grown from an office-boy to a mighty banker; he only wished sometimes that Sadie could love the country better, or have the advantages of her Cousin Harriet, since she could not.

He pulled up at the little covered platform that was the only railway station, and looked about him.

"A lot of trunks," Sadie had warned him, "and perhaps a maid. Aunt Hatty

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had a maid when they came up, so long ago, you know."

And Sadie had worried so much about her own clothes and drawn such highly colored sketches of her cousin's probable wardrobe that her father half expected to find some gorgeous ball-costume waiting him and the chestnuts on the platform.

But there were only a trunk and an alligator-skin bag there, and he turned the horses and sat comfortably to wait for the train. On the other side of the road were the "store" and the ice-barn; farther along the little church, and then a straggly row of houses. Then the great green fields and the long scented wood-road. He got down from the high seat and strolled over to the store. The clerk and his slouching, angular employer were both occupied in serving one customer.

"Well, you see, Miss, you'll just hev to wait half an hour and then the delivery wagon'll be back, and Henry'll take you up. Job Hart's horse is bein' shod and Job's tender of him anyhow, and William Jackson's hayin', and he's taken all the

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other horses—how do, Mr. Hoyt, here's someone for you, now!"

A tall slender girl turned about and came quickly toward him.

"Is it Uncle Tom?" she said. Mr. Hoyt stared at her. If any girl could exactly and minutely resemble his brother William, and yet make an exceedingly nice-looking womanly girl, this girl had done it.

He held out his arms.

"You're William's daughter, and no mistake!" he said, and kissed her warmly. Then he held her off at arm's length, and looked her over.

Dark and slim, with a low coil of brown hair under her walking-hat, a stiff white collar under her firm little chin, a wood-brown jacket and skirt and trim alligator belt, and loose dogskin gloves swinging in her slim hand with the little emerald band on one finger, she was a pretty little traveller—a veritable nut-brown maid. The cuffs and collar of the crisp shirt-waist beneath the jacket added to the boyish look of William that gleamed in her brown eyes.

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"I'm so glad to be here!" she said, delightedly. "I'm going to have the nicest time, meeting you all and getting acquainted! I've any amount of messages from Papa," and they left the store.

Mr. Hoyt felt strangely pleased. He realized that he had dreaded this visitor not a little till now. She caught sight of the horses fretting at the delay and pawing the ground nervously.

"Are those ours? Oh, Uncle Tom, what beauties! Aren't they splendid? May I drive them? I can drive a little. There, there! stand still, you handsome things!" and she grasped the bits and soothed them while the trunk was lifted in.

Uncle Tom's sense of relief melted into downright pleasure.

"Yes, they're very decent beasts," he said, with pride. "I'm proud of them myself. I wished Sadie liked them as well as you do," he added, as she administered a final pat to each glossy neck and climbed up beside him.

"Doesn't she care for horses?" asked

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the girl, and before he could warn her, she had gathered up the reins and tightened them. The chestnuts reared and dashed off, but before his hand could clutch the reins, she had pulled them in and was managing them with the skill of a veteran driver. Her uncle's eyes lighted up.

"Well done!" he said, approvingly. "Where do those hands get the strength?" For they were little and slim and white as could be, but wiry, he saw at a second glance, and powerful.

"I have a pony at home," she said, "but I can only drive in the park, and not fast there. At Shelton, where we go in the summer, I drive the pair almost every day. Are there dogs at the farm?"

"Lady has four collie pups," he said; "do you like dogs, too?"

"Love them!" she beamed back at him. "I can't have one in the city, but I can have one of my own up here, can't I?"

"Two, if you like," he answered, with a laugh. He was delighted with William's girl already.

As they drove through the wood-road,

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every mile of which found her more impressed with its beauty, he told her a little of how the farm had grown from the small place she had seen ten years ago. "And we've all grown farmers, too, you know," he warned her, with a smile. "I'm afraid the boys haven't the best of manners, my dear. And we've all got a little rusty—not but what I've done the best I could for them. We've got more books than most farmers, and there's a fine academy in the next town, Doverly, and the children have had plenty of schooling. We get into Doverly for a lecture and a concert now and then, and what with the scholarship at Yale your father got for Walter and the place he's promised William, Jr., I'm not afraid for the boys. Sadie, now——"

He paused, and the girl, with William's capable air, pulled the chestnuts around the corner.

"Sadie?" she repeated, "how is Sadie? Is she as pretty as ever?"

He smiled in a puzzled way. "Oh, yes," he answered, "she's pretty, I guess.

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She'll be surprised to see you," he added, with a twinkle in his eye. And no more than that would he say.

They drew up with a flourish before a rambling well-kept lawn, and a shingled white house setting well back from it. Comfortable barns stretched behind, and a level croquet-ground, with four fat puppies scrambling after the balls, gave it a pleasant air. A colored hammock flapped in the steady breeze, and the neat paths around the house were beautifully gravelled. Harriet's smile was admiring as well as welcoming.

"Isn't it nice! Isn't it pretty!" she said, turning to see the lovely green hills roll off before her and the silver Connecticut gleam among the trees far away.

"We think it's pretty nice," returned Uncle Tom. "Here, Mother! Here's Harriet!"

Out came Aunt Mary, placid and comfortable and unchanged, Harriet thought. Behind her two tall handsome boys, a little awkward, a little defiant at the prospect of this metropolitan cousin, but with a cer-

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tain old-fashioned courtesy in their warm hand-shakes.

“I’m so glad to come! I—oh! *see* the puppies! The darlings! I am to have one, Walter. Uncle Tom says I am!”

The ice was broken. Instantly four puppies were swarming in her lap, and two admiring boys were disputing over the best one for her. The praises of her fine driving completed her conquest, and she was booked for a run with the buckboard that night. They led her in, and she smiled with pleasure at the comfortable homely sitting-room. It was not the common farmer’s parlor—far from it. On the stained floor a delicious rug of rag carpet, dull and soft, was stretched; stained pine cases held a goodly array of well-worn books; a heavy mahogany dining-table had been turned into a writing-desk and sewing-stand and book-shelf combined, and comfortable chairs, with an old enormous settle which faced the large hearth, completed the furnishing. There were none of the cheap knick-knacks and photographs, tidies and chromos, that during

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the last generation crept in to spoil the old-time living-room. The few pictures were as good as those that hung on the walls at Harriet's home, for her mother had selected both. And she could catch the glimmer of a white cloth and shining glasses from the dining-room that showed, if nothing else had told her of it, the simple good taste that managed her aunt's house. Up the broad low stairs that led to the bed-rooms she walked, vaguely conscious of a peaceful ease, a quiet living, that the bustling avenue house lacked. She remembered that Uncle Tom had been quite a poetic scholarly fellow, and she caught the effect of his taste in the plain dark colorings of the inside of the house and the rich riot of old-fashioned flowers and well-placed trees outside.

Her own room, with its rag rugs, snowy bed, quaint old green wooden furniture, and the old willow toilet-set that her quick eye told her was very valuable—it had been Grandmother Hoyt's—delighted her. The soft fragrance of lavender and mignonette, the latter in a dear old yellow

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bowl on the bureau ; the few engravings of country scenes—"The Wayside Brook," "The Old Well," "The Stepping-Stones" ; the soft country air stirring the curtains ; the puppies yelping below, the jingle of cow-bells as the slow sleek creatures came home to be milked, all filled her breast with a great comfort.

"I have come home!" she said, with a pretty little gesture of friendliness to Aunt Mary, who with old-fashioned hospitality, had come up with her to help her unpack. The kindly woman's eyes filled with tears. "Dear child," she said, kissing her again, "only make it home, and we shall be very pleased and happy. Your Uncle Tom is brighter than he's been for a month, to see you. He's been feeling a little low for a while about Sadie——"

"Why, where is Sadie?" cried the girl. A girl cousin of her own age, almost, was the only thing needed to complete this dear, wholesome, pleasant household. "Why didn't I see her?"

"She said perhaps you'd rather wait till you'd rested awhile and got unpacked,"

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said Aunt Mary doubtfully. "I don't know as I ought to have come up myself, but it seemed as if 'twas just as well——"

"It was the only thing to do! It was sweet of you!" cried the girl, with a vague resentment at this cousin who could not welcome her simply, like the others. She began unpacking quickly, shaking out and putting away, talking all the while. An armful of magazines came out for Uncle Tom—*Century*, *Scribner*, *Harper*, *Outlook*, *Atlantic*—all the month's publications. A box of Huyler's for Aunt Mary, whose sweet tooth was a family joke; a pocket-camera for William, from William, Sr., the label explained; a fountain-pen for Walter, "to take his examinations with," and last of all, a square flat package, tied in white tissue with narrow violet ribbon.

"This is for Sadie," with a little blush, "I made them myself."

Aunt Mary went to the hall, a chocolate peppermint in each hand.

"Sadie! Sadie! come and get your present!" she called. Walter was scribbling happily with the pen, and William

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had taken two ecstatic pictures of Lady and the pups before a gentle knock at the half-open door called Harriet from the willow toilet-set. "Come in!" she answered, splashing vigorously, "Aunt Mary?"

"Excuse me, no, it's I, Sadie—I'll go if—if you're engaged," a high sweet voice drawled at her. Harriet, buried in a towel, looked through dripping eyes at her cousin, with a sinking heart. She saw a girl, tall and slender like herself, but fair, with deep violet eyes and almost flaxen hair. Her soft pink cheeks were dusted with powder, Harriet saw in an amazed glance; her pretty yellow hair was curled and frizzled to stand out an inch beyond either ear, and piled in a somewhat mussed fashion on top of her head; one wrist bore a dozen slender silver bangles, the other two heavy chain bracelets. A large topaz ring on one hand and a garnet and an amethyst on the other, with an old-fashioned gold watch suspended from a cheap filigree chatelaine, completed her jewelry. She wore a blue lawn sprinkled with heavy white scrolls, ruffled with white cotton-lace,

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and finished with a broad lace collar and blue ribbon. She seemed utterly out of place in this plain, quiet, out-of-doors family, and Harriet felt in a moment the meaning of the doubtful expression on Aunt Mary's face, the uncertain smile on Uncle Tom's, when they mentioned Sadie. Nevertheless, the girl was strikingly pretty and graceful, she saw, and her cheap tight dress had a certain effect of its own—one knew perfectly well what she had intended it should be like.

As Harriet came forward to kiss her she raised one arm to the level of her shoulder and extended her hand. "I'm awfully glad to see you," she drawled, with a perfunctory little smile. "Did you have a hard journey?"

Harriet could not restrain a smile. "Not at all, thank you," she replied politely, taking the hand, "it is a lovely country. I enjoyed every minute of it. I am sorry not to be dressed," she added, as Sadie turned to go, apparently, "but won't you stay? I'll be ready in a minute," turning to the closet.

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With courtesy satisfied Sadie was glad to stay, and looked longingly at the closet. "May I see your clothes? Are you all unpacked?" she asked, eagerly.

Harriet looked rather surprised. "Why, certainly," she said, "only there's not much to see. I've only one trunk."

"Oh!" cried her cousin, "only one?" and before Harriet could answer her she was in the closet. As their owner had said, the clothes were not much to see. There were half a dozen shirt-waists, a dark short skirt of some tailor stuff; a pretty pale organdie with mauve ribbons, and two light gingham—*that was all*. Sadie fingered them a little, and turned away with a disagreeable little smile. So Uncle William was miserly, then! She had more of a closetful than that herself. She did not know that both the stiff short skirt and the brown silk-lined suit were tailor-made; that the mauve organdie was worn over an exquisite silk slip; that one gingham had bits of real Cluny lace at throat and wrist, and that the tiny bands of insertion in the other were extremely lovely. She thought

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hastily that Cousin Harriet found anything good enough for the country, while as a matter of fact her cousin had brought, simply enough, of the best she had.

"Haven't you a white duck?" asked Sadie quickly. Harriet wondered at her interest, but replied politely, trying not to show her disappointment at her cousin's air:

"I have three suits, but Mamma thought they would be unsuitable to bring. They must be washed so often, you know, and there might not be people who would know how——"

"Is this for me?" Sadie fell upon the package, and tore off the paper and ribbon. Three long scented pads, silk-covered and ribbon-bound, fell out. The silk was sprayed with violets, and violet ribbon bound it. A dainty odor of violet and orris filled the room.

"I made them—they're for your bureau-drawer, you know; they keep the things sweet," said Harriet timidly, for she was just a bit afraid of her cousin.

"Thank you, it was very kind," returned

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the other shortly, and left the room, taking the sachets with her. Harriet was annoyed, but saved from real unhappiness by the sound of bureau-drawers rapidly opened and shut. Sadie was hastening to put her gifts to their use, forgetting for the moment her rather exaggerated courtesy.

The bell rang for the substantial country supper, and as Farmer Hoyt looked up from the old-fashioned grace that he had learned from his father, he thought that the merry hungry girl, looking over her gingerbread and milk with laughing eyes to tease Walter about his examinations and engage William to take her about the farm the next day, seemed far more in place than the daughter of the house, whom farm life plainly bored, and whose frizzled hair and jewelled hands contrasted so greatly with the smooth coils and bare fingers of the city cousin.

Harriet won fresh laurels from the buckboard drive, and went early to bed, sleepy already from the fresh country air. As she braided her brown hair, looking out at the dim black trees and listening to the peep-

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ers and bull-frogs in the pond near, catching the sweet warm odor of the fields and flowers at every breath of wind, the girl realized that she had never liked any place so much. The spruce neatness of their summer cottage at the shore seemed tiresome to her in its likeness to the city home; the handsomely dressed women, the shine of the ocean, the babble of the crowds of children, the dress parade along the boardwalk, the dances and concerts at night, even, of which she had had little experience, were not worth this lovely dreamy quiet. The blood of her grandfather—country blood—woke in her veins and called her to stay here with these kindly quiet people, and learn the deep green places and the curving little streams and the open pastures and the brilliant September woods. The grave pleasant eyes of her uncle; the motherly busy smile of her aunt; her tall young cousins' interest and admiration, all drew her to them. She saw a stretch of lonely thoughtful days; of long conversation with Uncle Tom, whom she understood better than she had ever

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understood her business-like father; of housewifely duties, which had always attracted her, with Aunt Mary; of out-door life and sports with William and Walter.

And then she saw the one discordant note in all this—pretty unsatisfied Sadie. She was a bright girl, almost clever, and how she loved the breath and glitter and business, the airs and graces, the fads and fashions, of the life she knew of but could not live! She was not vulgar at heart, only from lack of the very training that these simple souls could not give her. A year of city schools and city manners and customs, would show this hungry unsatisfied little imitator that there was work to be done and lessons to be learned, and a sameness and regularity of its own in the existence she had evidently pictured to herself all charming whims and luxurious leisure.

A knock at the door and the girl herself entered, her pretty flaxen hair all loose on her shoulders, her eyes noting with delight her guest's dainty ruffled night-gown.

"I want you to tell me all about it," she

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said coaxingly. "I want to know what you do all day, and about the people you see and—and everything!"

Harriet smiled. "I don't see very much. I've just left school, you know, and I had to study pretty hard; and the people—oh, they were my own friends and family friends—just like anybody," she concluded lamely.

As she saw the disappointment in Sadie's face she added: "I'm not out in society, you know, Sadie. I don't go to balls and such things, if you mean that. I was going to begin next year—" She paused as she noticed that she had said "was." Was her plan so settled, then? she asked herself.

"Oh!" Sadie was frankly displeased. "Why, I'm only seventeen—a year younger than you—and I left school this year. Father didn't like it, but I told him I'd read German with Walter, and that I was old enough. Don't you go to any parties?"

Harriet smiled at the almost childish manner. "Why, yes, at Shelton we dance twice a week, and in the city there are little teas, and the *matinée*, and—and—oh!

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Sadie, it's all the same thing! It's not half so nice as this!"

Sadie frowned. "It sounds lovely, even the little bit you say," she murmured to herself. "Do *you* give teas?"

"Just to the girls, of course, but I helped sometimes at Mamma's when she wanted me to get used to talking to the people. I never knew what to say at first," added Harriet reminiscently.

Sadie's eyes flashed. "I should love that!" she cried. "And I should love to talk to them all, too."

Harriet thought that her mother would have something to say as to the extent of Miss Sadie's conversation, but did not reply.

When her cousin had left her alone she thought very hard before she fell asleep, and sent a photograph and a letter to Shelton the next morning.

In a few days Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom were meditating over a letter from that sea-side village.

"Since Harriet would really prefer to wait a year before taking up her social

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duties, and since the air seems to agree with her so very well, I am very glad to have her in such good hands," the letter concluded. "We cannot consent to no return, however, and we shall be very pleased to borrow Sarah for a year, particularly as I understand from Harriet that she is very anxious to see something of city life and that you would like her to have a year in a good school. She can take Harriet's place at Mrs. Lee's and go with Ethel, who will try to make it pleasant for her, I am sure. I shall do for her just what I did for Harriet last year, and only hope Harriet can get her rosy cheeks under your care."

Harriet found them reading it, and slipped up behind them.

"If you're sure you can bear me for a year," she began, but their faces answered her. She was at home.

For Sadie herself and her joy—but it needs another story for that. How Sadie found her new life is a tale by itself, and this is only the story of the city girl who found her grandfather's life the life for her. The great green, breezy, woody country,

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from which his son had long ago gone out, called his son's daughter back to itself, and gave her a royal welcome.

And with a vague feeling of all this, Harriet left the uncle and aunt in the pleasant living-room and ran happily out to Lady and her puppies.

"I didn't know city girls could be so jolly," said William, watching her with the dogs.

"She's not a city girl any more—she lives here now; she's just a farmer, like the rest of us," and Walter laughed at her. "Aren't you, Harriet?"

She laughed back and pinched the puppies' ears.

"Of course I am!" she said.

Her Father's Daughter

Her Father's Daughter

THE eleven o'clock gong struck, and into the main hall there surged a stream of girls. To the uninitiated they would have seemed bent upon one another's downfall, for they pushed mercilessly in opposite directions, shouldered and dived and wedged through the crowd with a skill worthy their brothers of football fame, tied themselves into inextricable knots before the bulletin-boards, and chattered incessantly, with occasional bursts of laughter, that could hardly have failed to interest and annoy the victims just folding their papers in the rooms beyond.

In front of Room 3 the crowd was almost quiet. They glared nervously at text-books, hastily ran over their notes, or recklessly sharpened their pencils, girl fashion, with scowls and compressed lips. Plainly, a written lesson.

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"Where's Betty? She's surely coming? She simply *can't* cut to-day!" Katherine Eager's little frown deepened, and she peered down through the crowd. "Oh, Betty's coming; she's practising in the Gym. She's got a new curve, she thinks, and she's teaching the team. Did you know that Mary Reed has sprained her ankle?"

"Not really? Oh, girls, do you hear that? M. Reed's sprained her ankle!" Sighs of relief that tried to express sympathy arose from the crowd in front of Room 3. "It's mean, but we can't help being glad, Katherine, so don't wither us! It would have been awful for our team to lose the two best Centres, and the freshman team to keep perfect—you know it would! But they say our Subs are good. The door's open: that Betty, if she cuts to-day, I'm afraid she'll get into trouble!"

They crowded in as the outgoing class crowded out. "Was it hard? Oh, Elsie, was it hard? Was it the *Papacy*? If it was the *Power of the Crown* I shall die!

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Was it more than one question? Was it a paper?"

"Don't speak to me! Don't ask me anything—at least, anything you want to know! I flunked dead—dead! I'm conditioned, I know that. Oh, my poor parents! They little thought——"

"What nonsense! Do be sensible, Elsie, and tell us! Was it—oh, Betty! Betty! Here's your seat! Are you tired? Poor Betty! Did she have to come to classes occasionally? It *was* hard!"

Betty Hubbard sank into a seat. "Please lend me a pencil, somebody? Yes, the team do beautifully! No, thank you, I have one. I? Oh, nothing, of course! I know about the *Crown*, you know, but I left the *Papacy* till too late, and I was so sleepy! Perhaps I can get through, though."

She was five feet seven inches and a half, was Elizabeth Hubbard, and blond and beautiful to behold. Also she could jump a cord held to her shoulders' height, she could climb ropes like a monkey, she could make a Welsh rabbit unequalled

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in the college, and she had more friends than she could find time to visit. Her friends were wont to crush those envious ones, who pointed out that Miss Hubbard's recitations were not all that could be desired, by a little meaning smile, and a vague remark to the effect that one couldn't find time for *everything*, and that so long as Betty's *friends* were satisfied. . . .

Besides, Betty always "got through"—not gloriously, perhaps, not without occasional sighs from instructors and suggestions in Faculty meetings that although athletic triumphs were doubtless valuable, they hardly entered into a consideration of one's fitness for a diploma; not without periodical repentances on Betty's part and vows to cram no more, but to study regularly and properly, and show people that the captain of the sophomore basket-ball team could take a higher grade if she chose!

Yet there was so much to do! There were the boats and tennis and the walking club and the dances, and just now, her

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horse was in town and needed driving, oh, at least every day! And she studied when she had time, and her friends loved her, and the heads of departments looked at her, standing—blond and tall—in chapel, and said, "What a remarkably handsome girl Miss Hubbard is!" And the instructors, who bore with Betty's doubtful German and unsteady History, replied, "Yes, if she would only work a little!"

One of the instructors looked at her now, as she sat flushed and just a little tired from coaching her team; her wavy yellow hair running into little crisp curls at her temples, her strong brown hands resting in her lap, the very picture of contented ease. Next to her, her friend Katherine Eager held her sharpened pencils and Betty's hatpins in her hand, and all her lessons well arranged in her shapely head. "One good paper, at least!" thought the instructor. On Betty's other side little nervous Anna Wilkinson studied at her neat back-hand notes. The instructor wondered if she would ever stop studying, and if she really was as nervous as she seemed. She must

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know that her work was practically faultless! And that big Elizabeth Hubbard was as calm as a summer afternoon, and probably knew nothing of the subject. Ah, well—which was happier?

“I will call the roll if you will come to order,” said Miss Lennox. “Miss Adams, Miss Archer, Miss Atwood——”

And when the roll was finished the instructor took a folded paper from the pile before her and creased it open. “I want a short paper to-day,” she said, “with as little padding as possible. I simply wish to get at your knowledge of the facts. I don’t object to your putting it in outline form, if you choose, and it is on no account to be more than three pages in length. Take your time, but condense! The subject is the rise and decline of the Papacy. I shall ask for the papers at five minutes of twelve.”

She bent her head over the paper in her hand, and the room became very still. A few plaintive sighs came from the back of the room: a few sinners were meeting a just fate. Katherine Eager put her chin

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into her hand and stared at the blackboard ; she always thought for a full half of the time, and then wrote for the other half without a second's pause. Anna Wilkinson gasped and flushed and whispered, " Oh, dear ! " and looked altogether the veriest martyr in the room. One would not have expected from her appearance the series of marks that every class-book showed opposite her name. Betty Hubbard sat quite motionless, her hands in her lap. It took very little time for her to assure herself that she knew absolutely nothing of the *Papacy*. To do her justice, it was the one subject of which she was utterly ignorant. An ordinary lesson, in three or four parts, she could have attacked with some hope of success. The *Power of the Crown* she had studied hard last night—if it had only been that ! Ah, well ! Betty was philosophical, if nothing else. Such things would happen ; she really deserved it ; she had chanced it once too often, that was all. She would work hard for the next one, and simply tell the truth—that she wasn't prepared.

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Suddenly a thought sent her heart beating swiftly, and she sat up staring at Miss Lennox. Suppose—suppose—what if it should be *that*! In a flash there raced through her mind the new rule in regard to the basket-ball teams: that no girl could play on the regular or sub teams whose standing was below a certain average. What was *her* average? She remembered the horror of her own team last year, when two home-men were ruthlessly taken off at a week's notice, and only her own marvellous playing, sure eye, and incredible jumps for the great ball won the freshman team the game—the first game the freshmen had won from the sophomores since the great annual contest was instituted. It seemed to her she should never forget the glory of that night: the team that carried her triumphantly about the gymnasium on its loyal shoulders; the shouting applauding gallery; the sophomore captain, white and tired, with a suspicion of tears in her eyes, who shook her hand bravely—"Miss Hubbard, you are a wonder! I never saw such playing!"—

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and then went back to her downcast team, leaving Betty red with pleasure, and a little hysterical sorrow for the sophomores; the supper down-town, with the class colors and the toasts, "*Here's to Betty Hubbard, drink her down!*" and the cheers; the strangers who shook hands and said, "The class is *so* proud of you, Miss Hubbard!"

Ah, that was sweet! That made one love the college! And they could do it this year, too. Two girls laid up, to be sure, but Betty was a host in herself. She knew every inch of the floor, she knew the capacities of every girl, she knew——

"Why don't you begin, Betty? What's the matter? For heaven's sake, write *something!*" whispered Katherine. "It's half past, already! It's only an outline, you know."

Betty stared at her, half dazed. "I can't! I don't know a thing. I learned about the *State*—I'm going home!" and she half rose. The instructor looked at her, laying down the last leaf of the third paper. "Do you wish more paper, Miss Hubbard?" she said. Betty giggled

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hysterically. "No, thank you," she answered, and sank back.

Katherine frowned. "Oh, Betty, why didn't you study! *Do* think up something!" Her mind was clearly arranged, now, and her pencil flew. Betty glanced at her paper. "In the eleventh century the Church—" Ah, yes, she remembered that, too.

Clearly as ever she saw in her life, Betty Hubbard saw that this paper must be written. Her record she did not know, but she knew that it could not bear a *zero* for a written lesson. She would go off the team immediately. She, of all people, would make the best example for girls who would not study. There was no other captain. The freshman team was strong and well coached. She knew something of every other probable topic but just this one—it was too cruel. She would study it later, she would learn it thoroughly, but now—

And looking at Kate's paper, she deliberately copied down the headings of the paragraphs and the chief dates. She omitted all details; she took just enough

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to show a bare knowledge of the facts, and every date, as she copied, appeared familiar to her. One evening's cramming would have given her all this. It was absurd to lose everything for the work of one evening! Her cheeks were hot, her eye glowing. "What a beauty she is!" thought the instructor. And, "Will you close your papers now?" she said.

They laid them on the desk and streamed out. "I'm glad you bluffed it out—for I suppose you did, Betty?" said Kate.

"Yes—no—I don't know!" and Betty was gone.

Well, it was done. Right in front of her the Dustan girls had amiably compared notes, and Ethel White had cribbed pages from her room-mate. It was no such sin. She knew it all, anyway, once; and for the sake of the team, she owed it to them. Oh, why had she gone into that class at all!

"Betty! Elizabeth! Miss Hubbard! I want to speak to you!"

She turned, and met the senior president. "I want you to meet my mother; she asked

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to meet you; she knew your father. Mother, this is Miss Hubbard, our sophomore basket-ball captain!"

Betty said something polite—she could not have told what—to the sweet-voiced woman before her. What was she saying? "I am glad to meet John Hubbard's little girl—his big girl, I should say! I knew your father well, my dear. He was one of the best men I ever knew. My husband often said that John Hubbard had the finest sense of honor of any man of his acquaintance. And how is your mother?"

It was only a few minutes, and Betty was on the campus. Her head ached, and she could not think. But in her ears rang, and would not cease, one sentence—"the finest sense of honor—the finest sense of honor!"

She turned toward the gymnasium. "I'll get the score-cards," she said, half aloud, and then added, "the finest sense of honor!" She stood still. "What do I care?" she said. "Why do I notice her?" And in her heart there echoed, "I am glad to meet John Hubbard's little girl."

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Elizabeth Stanley Hubbard lifted her head and took a deep breath. "Oh, all right! all right!" she whispered, as if to someone behind her. "I'm going to! Are you satisfied?"

She hardly knew how she got to the farther dormitory and found herself knocking at a door. "Come in!" said someone, and Betty walked up to Miss Lennox. The senior on the couch half rose. "Do I go?" she asked, easily. Who was she? Oh, yes! Betty remembered Miss Lennox's friend. "No," she said, "don't go on my account. I simply came to ask you for my history paper, Miss Lennox—it's all cribbed!"

Miss Lennox flushed, and looked curiously at this big handsome creature who stood so straight and brought all out-of-doors into the room with her. The senior forgot her air of polite inattention, and stared.

Then the instructor showed her tact. Quietly she sorted her papers and handed one to Betty. "Here it is," she said, and, as Betty slowly tore it through, "my dear girl, why did you do it?"

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Betty looked out of the window. "Really, I don't know," she said. "It was certainly very silly." She turned to go.

"Miss Hubbard, I can't—you know, I can't give you any mark for this paper," said Miss Lennox. Betty drew her head up, and her brows met. "Certainly not, Miss Lennox," she said, coldly, and left the room.

The instructor in history stared at the senior. "What do you call that?" she asked. The senior sank back on the couch. "I call it pluck," she said.

The captain of the Sophomore basketball team went home, and put on her door a sign to the effect that she was asleep and not to be disturbed. But, just before supper, Miss Katherine Eager, with the merest pretence at a knock, entered, scolding vigorously.

"Betty Hubbard, *why* will you be so foolish! Betty, I say! Oh, were you asleep? What's the matter? I was awfully worried about your history to-day. I knew you were bluffing. The marks are in, and do you know, I was going in the

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office to get my excuse for Sunday, and I heard Miss Roberts say your name. I went right in, and she was saying: 'But she's just gotten through. One mark less, and we could take her off the team; her history is very poor. It's a pity—she could do more!'

"And then they heard me, and stopped. But it was a close shave, Betty, dear, and you *could* study harder! You know you ought to, if only for the team's sake. Why, Betty, what are you crying about? Oh, Betty! *we* know you could study if you wanted; *we* don't care about that, Betty! No, we oughtn't to, either. No, you *aren't* a beast! Nor a coward!"

There was a pause, and Katherine patted the couch-pillow encouragingly.

"No, you're just the dearest girl in the world, Betty; but I hope you've learned your lesson, my dear!"

Betty looked up from the pillows and reached out a hand that clutched unconsciously a crumpled score-card. "Yes, I've learned my lesson!" she said.

A Country Cousin

A Country Cousin

A VERY pretty fair-haired girl stood in one corner of the great waiting-room of a large New York railroad station late one afternoon, and looked wonderingly about her. The bustle and rush of the place fascinated her; the hurrying porters, the loud-voiced heralds of departing trains, the streams of men, women and babies that flowed constantly by, the benches, always emptying themselves, but always full—it was a new scene to her, and she would have stood watching it indefinitely had not a hand touched her arm.

“I beg pardon, Miss, but was you expecting—” it was a man in livery. Before she had time to answer him, a young girl seized her hand.

“It’s Cousin Sarah, I know by the pho-

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tograph!" she cried. "It's all right, Michael. We thought you were lost, Cousin Sarah. I'm Ethel. How do you do?"

"I'm well, thank you; how are you?"

Not that she needed to ask. Ethel's bronzed cheeks and firm muscular grasp would have done credit to a boy of her own sixteen years. As they threaded their way to the carriage, Sarah studied her curiously—she was very different from her cousin's idea of a city girl. Her long straight hair, though it was fresh and glossy, was guiltless of any attempt at curl or wave, and hung in a thick, evenly plaited tail below her waist. Between the tops of her low-heeled, broad-soled walking-shoes—low ties, though it was well through October—and the stitching of her heavy dark walking-skirt her ankles were plainly to be seen, and the felt walking-hat had not even a quill or wing to boast of; she might have been a little girl of twelve, as far as her dress was concerned, thought the visitor.

What Ethel's impressions were, she did not imply by so much as a glance. That

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she had rapidly formed them, no one less self-absorbed than her cousin could doubt. She saw a head of lovely flaxen hair curled out of all resemblance to its natural waveness; soft pink cheeks, accentuated by a black dotted veil; a graceful girlish figure, laced into a stiff wasp-waisted effect that made easy motions impossible; pretty little feet, pinched into high-heeled, thin-soled shoes, with old-style pointed toes. Her violet eyes almost made one forget the big picture-hat, loaded with cheap feathers; her deep dimple distracted one from a consideration of her tightly fitted jacket, elaborately trimmed with imitation astrachan; her lovely coloring blinded one to the soiled white gloves and worn-off, dusty train that dragged behind her.

"But Mamma will arrange all that!" thought Ethel comfortably, thankful that none of her school friends had seen this strangely dressed, self-sufficient cousin that had come to take Harriet's place. If she could have read the thoughts of the girl beside her, she would have hesitated between amusement and irritation. For it

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must be admitted that her cousin thought her dowdy, under-dressed, and babyish-looking. At fourteen she had looked older than Ethel; at sixteen she had brought her skirts down definitely and heaped her hair high; now, at seventeen, she considered herself a woman grown.

As the coupé rolled through the darkening streets, her heart beat hard with excitement. Up to now she had hardly believed it all; it had seemed too good to be true. To live in a big city home, to command a coachman and a butler, to have one's hair dressed by a maid, to eat late dinners with flowers and cut-glass and silver, surrounded by men and women in brilliant evening dress, to drive in the Park, to——

"You've not been in New York before, have you?" asked Ethel.

Her cousin's face flushed. Not sure of herself, and therefore suspicious, she found an utterly unintentional patronage in the simple question.

"Not—not often!" she answered, stiffly, and a silence fell between them.

"We've only been back a few days," vol-

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unteered Ethel, presently; "we stay later every year. But I had to be back for school. You're going with me, Mamma says."

"I think perhaps so—if I like it," returned her visitor, "though I am really through school."

Ethel bit her lip. This was a very disagreeable girl, without doubt. "If she liked it," indeed. She little knew her Aunt Harriet, evidently. "Not often!" Her mother had distinctly written that she had never been in New York since she was a little girl of eight or nine, when she had made them a short visit. And yet Harriet had said that she would enjoy it so with them and that they would like her! It seemed improbable to Ethel now.

The carriage drew up to the curb, and Michael was off again for Papa. Ethel ran lightly up the stone steps and through the tiled vestibule.

"Mamma is upstairs, John?" she asked the solemn middle-aged man at the door of the rich dark hall, with its polished wood and soft shaded lights.

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"Yes, Miss Ethel, in her dressing-room. She said you was to go directly up, Miss Ethel, with the young lady."

The young lady's eyes sparkled. If old Ellen, who had persisted in calling her "Sadie" for seventeen years, could have heard the respectful tones of the man—and Ethel was only sixteen—how she would have opened her shrewd gray eyes!

To meet a real woman of the world in her boudoir! To discuss her life, her aims, her triumphs with her, to show her that one understood, that one had read, even if one "had not been in New York before!"

Would they dine in evening dress? She understood that they did, and to her mother's horror had insisted on constructing one from an old silk dress of grandmother's, from which her slight pure shoulders rose with what was to the family a startling effect. Would she wear gloves——

Ethel was knocking at a door. "Come in!" called a low rich voice, and Sarah saw for the first time in her life a black-dressed, white-aproned maid brushing her mistress's shining hair.

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"This is Sarah—how do you do, my dear?"

The lady was clad in a rich wadded robe of bright-colored silk. It was folded loosely about her and displayed delicious laces and tiny ribbons underneath. A low wide dresser was spread with silver and crystal toilet articles; over a chair a beautiful shimmering gown was thrown; a sweet fresh perfume filled the room.

How young she looked! Surely she could not be within a year of her sister-in-law's age! How soft and white and pink-nailed her hands were! The girl felt suddenly dusty and awkward; her dress seemed scant; her shoes ill-fitting.

"And you got here safely? Yes, and the home people are all well? And about your work. I shall not have much time to see you for a day or two; but my sister, Miss Meade, will show you about anything you may want to know. I hope you will be very contented and happy with us, Sarah. Ethel will do all she can, I know. As I told your father, I shall make no difference between you. I am a very busy woman—

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que faites vous, Félice? pas si vite—but I try not to neglect my babies utterly—*n'est-ce pas petite?*” and she pinched Ethel's ear.

“*Mais oui, chère maman,*” and Ethel began to explain something in French, evidently very funny, for both her mother and Félice laughed with much amusement.

Their cousin felt decidedly awkward and out of touch with the scene. She had imagined herself taking social precedence over this school-girl, and here the school-girl had slipped into a tongue unknown to her and was apparently of greater interest to this wonderful bare-armed woman than she.

Suddenly Aunt Harriet caught her eye. Something in the girl's face struck her and she interrupted Ethel's story unceremoniously.

“You speak French, my dear? I remember Harriet's writing——”

“No, I don't understand it at all,” Sadie replied, stiffly.

Aunt Harriet looked annoyed, regretful, and apologetic at once.

“I beg your pardon, dear, a thousand

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times! How very thoughtless of me! But I had a firm notion you were a very good French scholar—Harriet wrote that you were in advance of her, surely! Ethel and I should have been more——”

“It was German Harriet meant. I don’t know French,” Sadie explained, mollified by the apology and the compliment to her powers in one direction at least.

“Ah, that is it. You can help Ethel, then. She is not so good at it. Your room, you know, will be with Ethel—she will do anything she can, I know, to make it pleasant for you. Life here is a little different, of course, from the country. There are, you will understand easily, greater restrictions in some ways. But that will arrange itself. You have the fencing-class to-morrow, Ethel?”

“Yes, Mamma.”

“Wear your long box-coat, and I will pick you up afterward and take you both to the Park. Have you a gymnasium suit, Sarah, my dear?”

“No, I don’t care for gymnastics,” was the decided reply.

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"So? You probably need them badly, then. Harriet's suit is here; you are about of a size, I think. Well, good-by, babies—*à plus tard!* I'll pick you up at four-thirty, Ethel. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Mamma!" and Ethel kissed her warmly. Sarah watched them wonderingly. Did they go to bed at half-past six?

A scuffle in the hall, a rush, and a little boy of nine or ten escaped from a panting German woman close behind him.

"*Mein Kind! mein Kind! was machst du——*"

But he brushed past the girls and threw himself upon the vision in mauve silk and amethysts.

"*Gut nacht, mütterchen!*" he burst out. "*Ach, wie schön—wie wunderschön!*"

She laughed, and kissed him and gave him a tiny chocolate, wrapped in silver paper, and the nurse bore him off triumphantly.

Ethel followed them, and her cousin followed her, lost in wonder and disappointment. What did it all mean? Was this

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her welcome? Were no questions to be asked her, no conversation thought necessary? Was she to have nothing to eat? Why did they say good-night?

"Is your mother going out to sup—dinner?" she asked, as they entered a pretty room furnished in pink and white, with two little white enamelled beds, two white fur rugs, two pretty little maple desks, and pink rosebud chintz everywhere.

"I think not—I think there's a dinner-party, Papa said; I heard Dick begging Katrina to save him out some almonds and the wish-bones of something, and Katrina asked him if she should beg them of the guests—she is so funny!"

"A dinner-party—how lovely! What shall you wear?"

"I? Oh, goodness, *I'm* not going!"

"Not going? Why——"

"Oh, I'm not out at all, you know. We don't come downstairs. I have my lessons to get——"

"And sha'n't I go, either?"

"Why, of course not. You're coming to school with me, aren't you? You can't

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very well do that and go to formal dinners, can you?"

Ethel was slipping on a lighter skirt as she spoke, and took out a pale pink silk blouse, with a soft pink belt a little later. through the open closet-door her cousin saw dresses of her own; and one of the chiffoniers, she noticed, was half-filled with her things: somebody had made quick work with them.

"Then where *are* you going?" she asked, discontentedly.

"Why, to supper, of course!" answered Ethel, tying a pink ribbon to the end of her long braid. "This year I went down to dinner when there were no guests; but, though I'm very strong, I don't digest things quite right, the doctor says, and when I had dinner late I always had such bad dreams. So he said for me to keep on eating supper with Dick for a year, and I'd be all right. I'd just as soon. When there's nobody dining here and Papa and Mamma aren't dining out, they often come up with us—Papa comes a lot. He likes it better."

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Her cousin sniffed unmistakably; she was still smarting from the lack of ceremony in her reception. To be pushed upstairs to bed like a baby! To be told that she needed gymnastics!

The German nurse looked in at the door to announce supper, and presently they were in the cheeriest of rooms, bright from a birch fire, hung with gay pictures—a nursery, evidently; but a well-stocked book-case, a dumb-waiter set in the wall, and a white-spread round table with seats for four transformed it into a charming combination of study and supper-room. At the head of the table sat a sweet-faced, delicate-looking woman with slightly grayed hair. She rose as the girls entered, and walking a little slowly, leaning her weight upon a stout cane, came toward them.

“How do you do, Sarah? I am Aunt Grace, you know,” she said in the same rich deep voice that Aunt Harriet had. “Are you going to take my Harriet’s place? You must be very careful! Harriet is a very nice young person!”

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Harriet's substitute only smiled uncertainly. This was a very strange family, surely. They made no more of meeting a new cousin than of greeting an old acquaintance. There was no "breaking the ice" by the use of any set formulas, no fear of constraint or possible uncongeniality, no disturbance of the ordinary routine. They seemed to take everything for granted.

At the foot of the table Dick took his small but important place, and the girls took the sides. Katrina served them with a simple well-cooked supper, and their visitor, her interest roused in spite of herself in the little boy's German chatter, almost forgot the series of mortifications she felt herself to have encountered.

After supper—all traces of which were cleared away with magical swiftness—Dick amused himself with some toys; Ethel, with many groans, set herself at writing an essay on "My Summer Vacation," and Aunt Grace, her hands busied with some pale shades of soft wool, began to talk in a low voice to her new niece.

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"I am very fond of your name," she said, "it was my mother's, and——"

"They always call me Sadie," interrupted the girl.

"But surely Sarah is far better! We are getting to drop those shortened names, very fortunately, I——"

"I hate Sarah. It's so old-fashioned," interrupted the owner of that name again.

Aunt Grace lifted her soft brown eyes from her crocheting and fixed them full on her niece.

"There is one thing that is never old-fashioned, my dear, and that is courtesy," she said quietly, but with decision. "Do you know that twice just now you have begun to speak before I had finished?"

The girl flushed with surprise and irritation. Never in years had she been corrected so openly, so calmly. She glanced to see if Ethel or Dick were laughing at her, but they were paying no attention whatever.

"I don't know what you mean—I think I'm old enough—that is, I didn't intend——"

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she stammered, but Aunt Grace smiled at her and continued:

“I know you would not intentionally be rude, my dear girl, but that is the great importance of perfectly careful manners, that they relieve us from the necessity of making allowances for people based on what we suppose to be their essentially good intentions. We must learn to express those intentions suitably, and not fall back on people’s charity, which as cultivated ladies we have no right to demand.”

Sarah listened, her eyes in her lap, her cheeks still red.

“Now I am going to take you in Harriet’s place, my dear, and if you will let me, try to do for you what I was glad to do for her. It is impossible for a young girl, with all the lessons of her books and the world to learn, to seize intuitively all that there is to know of the manners and customs of her social circle. These things must be taught. One of my greatest pleasures, invalid as I am and unable to go out in society, has been to fit my nieces for it; and my sister has given this training, to a great extent,

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to me. She is a woman of wide social interests and duties, and you will doubtless while you are with us see far more of me than of her. So it is best for us to understand each other at once."

Sarah could not realize immediately that this slender, pale, gray-haired woman was as accustomed to controlling others, as certain of obedience and respectful submission, as her brilliant sister. But as Aunt Grace talked on, gently always, but firmly, and utterly unconscious, apparently, of the possibility of any protest, the girl felt instinctively that she was in the midst of a new order of things, where she, and not those about her, must conform. Argument was clearly out of the question. Grumbling, she realized, would not be expected or tolerated. If Aunt Grace chose to correct her and deliver little lectures on manners and morals, she must listen patiently; it was comforting to observe that Ethel paid no attention and seemed to see nothing at all unusual in a young lady's being reproved for interrupting.

Aunt Grace had glided imperceptibly

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from the subject, and presently, before she knew it, Sarah was confiding her plans and dreams for the winter to a polite and attentive listener. She described the long dull evenings at home; the lack of excitement, of pleasant companionship, of all that her eager social little nature craved so keenly.

"And this will be so different!" she sighed impulsively.

Aunt Grace watched her critically, trying to pierce below the superficial self-confidence of her new charge; anxious to see if behind those deep violet eyes lay a really strong nature, justly demanding wider opportunities for action; or if only a longing for excitement and display had brought the flush to her soft pink cheeks. Something in the clear direct look that the girl in her earnestness, surprised out of her artificial mannerisms, gave her, seemed to reassure her, for she leaned forward and patted Sarah's hand lightly.

"A good stone bears hard cutting, my dear," she said, "and you may take Harriet's place yet!"

Then she sent them to bed, and remem-

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bering with a momentary pang that of all the fascinating company downstairs she had not caught one glimpse, Sarah followed her sleepy cousin to their room.

"I was riding all the early afternoon," Ethel explained, "and it *does* make me so tired by half-past nine!"

Curled up in her little white bed, Sarah reviewed the day's experiences. They had been very different from what she had expected, certainly. Perhaps to-morrow——

"You don't go to school Saturdays, do you?" she inquired of the other little bed.

"No," murmured Ethel, drowsily, "but I have my music-lesson in the morning, and the shampooer comes after that, and my hair is so thick and takes so long! And after lunch there's a rehearsal for our dancing-class party, and then I go to gym., and then—then—" she was drifting off, but Sarah pulled her back.

"Then?" she repeated.

"Then we'll drive with Mamma and—and—oh, that's all. Good-night!"

Sarah scowled into the darkness. Was this all, literally all? While she complained

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to herself she must have fallen asleep—for how long she did not know—when she suddenly awoke. She felt thirsty, and remembering the position of the white-tiled, porcelain-fitted bath-room, she slipped out of bed and went in for a drink. As she sipped the cool water slowly, a murmur of voices reached her ear.

“Oh, of course, get them all new. Félice assures me they are equally impossible. I had thought she might simplify two or three and they would do for school dresses, but Félice says they are so cut up and embroidered and twisted into imitations of styles years too old for her that it is out of the question.”

“She is very, very pretty, Harriet.”

“Is she? I was disappointed, I must say. She looked like a waitress, I thought.”

“Oh, no, dear. When I get her hair down and smooth, and those dreadful cheap corsets and boots off, and when she’s had a quarter’s fencing and learns not to strut when she walks and to keep her hands and feet still——”

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"You angel, I believe you love to do it!"

"Why, of course I do. She'll make a fine woman, I think, Hatty. It was pretty hard for her, a great deal of what she met with—she's utterly undisciplined, you see, not a bit of manner—and she took it very well for a high-spirited girl. Do you know, she reminds me very much of Mother Hoyt? She's not a bit like her father or her mother."

"I didn't see it, myself. Mother Hoyt was a beauty and a belle, too. But then, as you say, when she's dressed and gets a little more possible manner, we'll be able to tell better. How is Dicky? I thought he seemed a little feverish."

They passed on down the quiet hall and a door closed softly—the door of Dick's little room. Sarah sat dumb and humiliated on the cool tiled floor and wept tears of shame and anger.

Stay in this house? Stay to be insulted and criticised and patronized? Never! She would take the first train back. Harriet might return when she liked to this

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cold supercilious household—these unfeeling society women!

But, stop—she seemed to hear again Dicky's loving shout, "*Gut nacht, mütterchen!*" She saw again Ethel's glowing face as she laughed with her mother; she heard the question, "I thought he seemed a little feverish?" and admitted to herself that this woman was not a cold thoughtless mother.

And then she remembered Aunt Harriet's advice about buying very few clothes: such opportunities were so much greater here. She recalled her mother's sensible suggestion: "Get plain things, Sadie, and then Aunt Harriet can add to them if she wants. If you fuss them up so, she can't change them," and her scornful repudiation of the suggestion. Her quick eye had taught her in this short time that, simple as Ethel's clothes were, they were perfectly made from fine materials and hung with a grace that no amount of careful imitation in cheap fabric could even faintly approximate.

"When she's dressed and gets a little

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more possible manner!" She, Sadie, the fine-mannered member of the family! Why, she had always been teased about it!

"When she learns not to strut!" Was that what her mother called "niminy-piminy?"

"To keep her hands and feet still!" She had always twisted her fingers. What harm did it do? She couldn't study without that.

She lay at full length on the shining floor, only a dim night-light burning above her head, and cried as she had never cried before. How the boys would marvel at her humiliation—how little they had guessed how much she had to learn! And she had said so conceitedly to herself that Harriet really belonged in the country, and that she was most fitted for all the advantages Harriet could not grasp! And now she saw that all Harriet's simplicity, all her quiet direct manners, had been taught her—she had learned them in the city!

For half an hour her pride raged and wept alternately. Then slowly, as the af-

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ternoon sky clears for a soft bright sunset, a calmer, more reasonable mood crept over her stormy little soul. The native good-sense in her, the quick wit that had showed her so often the follies of others, showed her now her own. What a spirit she had come in—not to learn, to be helped to the thing she wanted most; but to show how little she needed such help! Not to fit in as easily and unobtrusively as she could to her new home, but to make her individuality as prominent as possible. Not to seem grateful, but disdainful, at this family life offered her so simply.

Slowly her crying ceased, and her lips took on a sweeter curve, her eyes a softer light. A different girl got up from the cold floor and stole in, tired and with reddened lids, but with a quieter heart, to bed. It was later than she knew, and she overslept till nine in the morning, to find a dainty breakfast-tray by her side and Katrina, all smiles, to see if she were well rested.

Ethel was at her music-lesson, Dicky was out for his roller-skating, and only Aunt Grace was with her when the sham-

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pooer rubbed and brushed her wavy gold hair, ending with:

“And if you’ll curl it less, Miss Hoyt, and brush it more, you’ll have a fine head of hair later on. It takes the life out of it and dries it so. And how do you wish for it to be done, Miss Meade?”

Yesterday she would have gasped at the question; to-day she sat quietly while Aunt Grace answered:

“Just a low knot at the back, Mrs. Archer, I think, or those pretty Gretchen braids wound about the head, perhaps.”

“That’s it, Miss Meade—the very thing!” And Sarah saw the pure curved lines of her own head for the first time in years.

Aunt Grace nodded with satisfaction.

“Very pretty, indeed,” she said, approvingly. “Your head is uncommonly well shaped, my dear.”

Then, as Sarah turned to put on her dress, the older woman laid a hand on her arm.

“I have been looking over your clothes, Sarah, and find them, as I had supposed

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they would be, a little too elaborate for school and street wear here. We do not dress young girls in large figured silks now, and as you will easily see, while it is quite unnecessary for young girls to follow the intricacies of the latest fashions, it will be vastly more comfortable for you to be dressed in the style of your school-mates. Nothing is more trying than a consciousness of looking unusual, I think, though it is a small matter, from one point of view, of course, and fortunately easily remedied."

Sarah blushed a little, but met Aunt Grace's eye firmly.

"Yes, Aunt Grace, I see what you mean," she answered.

Aunt Grace looked much relieved. "Several things have come up from the shops and Félice and I will help you with them now, my dear," she said, and they went into the bedroom. The daintiest fawn-colored suit lay on the bed; a dark blue plaid short skirt and blouse hung on one chair; a big soft felt hat with a long gray quill occupied another, and a pretty

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little rough short jacket, with heavy gray gloves lying on it, covered her elaborate astrachan coat.

"With this for school and this for church and a silk waist or two, we shall do very well to begin with," said Aunt Grace, as Félice patted the folds of the skirt into shape and privately kicked the long stiff corset into the closet.

"When the dancing class begins, a light thin silk with a tucked waist—you are so slender—and a long coat, and I think you will do very well," she concluded.

"*Maintenant, Mademoiselle—regardez !*" and Félice led her to the pier glass. She could not restrain a little cry of surprise. Was this Sadie? This girl, who looked—yes, like Ethel and Harriet, and yet so much prettier? For it was an undeniable fact that if she had looked pretty in her tortured, ribboned, pleated dresses, she was lovely indeed in the rich dark blue gown that hung so gracefully from her slender shoulders and threw out the pink of her cheeks and the fluffy yellow of her snugly braided hair.

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Ethel, who came in at that moment, stood in the frankest admiration.

"Why, why, you pretty, *pretty* thing!" she cried. "You're too dear to call Sarah; I'm going to call you Sallie!"

And though she thought Sallie was worse than Sarah, and could not understand why it should be more fashionable than Sadie, so thoroughly had she got herself in hand that she smiled and answered, a little shyly, it is true, but with real warmth:

"Call me anything you like, Ethel!" and they went down to lunch arm in arm.

Uncle Will had come up from town for the day, and she met him at the table: a quiet reserved man, with little resemblance to her father except when his rare smile reminded her of her father's frequent one. His clothes were like the pictures in tailors' plates, and his manner, as he handed John the cutlets, all that his little niece had ever imagined a great banker's should be.

The dining-room was beautiful; Aunt Grace, who took her sister's place at the

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head of the table—Sarah wondered where Aunt Harriet was lunching—was kindness itself; Ethel lost any little tone of patronage she might have had, and Dicky spilled some milk in his lap, so absorbed was he in watching his new cousin's big dimple.

Uncle Will seemed much interested in her progress; and when he had heard the program for the next week—an alternation of lessons all the morning; walks, rides, or gymnasium in the early afternoon; music or French later, with studying after supper—he pretended to be much shocked at such a dull round of work.

“And riding-school, too?” he inquired, sympathetically, “and visiting the children's hospital and Once-a-week Household Economic Classes, I'll wager. And a Girls' Friendly, to meet at the house, and dancing classes, and Emergency-or-How-to-Help-in-Cases-of-Accident lectures, too. Oh, yes, I know, I know! Ethel's just worn to a shadow with it, poor child! Not a minute to call her own or see her father in—not one! Could no more be spared, I suppose, to give up her fencing and come

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to the *matinée* with him and Sallie, and then have a little supper afterward, somewhere or other, than——”

“Oh, Papa! do you mean it? Is that why you’re home?”

“Well, you see I didn’t want Miss Sallie to feel that life was dull down here, and so I cheerfully sacrificed the opportunity to make seven thousand eight hundred and ninety-five dollars, and came up to see what you thought of my scheme.”

“I haven’t been since we came back,” declared Ethel, solemnly.

“Now you see what these New York girls want, Cousin Sallie,” explained Uncle Will. “Take their families, take their clothes, take—take their chocolate nougat, but give them the *matinée*, or they perish!”

“It’s only once a week,” murmured Ethel, “and then, only if I’m a model of ‘purity, propriety, and precision!’”

And while she ate her lunch there faded slowly out from Cousin Sallie’s mind the last vestige of these foolish air-castles that had no deeper foundation than her own

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vague desires. In their place she found pleasant pictures of a life far busier and more restricted than she guessed at; far narrower in its responsibility and importance than her conceited dream had allowed, but far better suited, she plainly saw, to her ignorance and her seventeen years. The pleasures, she realized, would be all the sweeter for her work to deserve them; the duties easy through her very lack of responsibility in assuming them. Aunt Grace would see to all that.

And though she could not chat so intimately with Aunt Harriet as that silly Sadie had long ago—so long, it seemed—anticipated, yet she could live with her, see her, try to be like her, and some day, perhaps, be worthy of her pains and kindness.

“Mamma is awfully pleased with you, Sallie,” confided Ethel, late that night. “She says you have great possibilities; she says when Harriet comes back she’ll give you a coming-out party together. Won’t that be grand?”

“Aunt Harriet is too good to me,” said Sallie, softly. “I don’t deserve it. To do

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so much for just a country cousin ! for that is 'all I am, you know."

"Oh, nonsense, you're not!" protested Ethel, warmly. "You're not a bit ; at first we thought you were—a little—but now we don't at all. You're just one of us. I'm awfully glad you came!"

"You can't be so glad as I am!" said her cousin, simply, and she fell asleep, truly at home to-night.

The Flesh-pots of Egypt

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I.

AN old gentleman, with a thin, nervous face, was rolling in an invalid's chair through a beautiful park, full of winding paths and tall vase-shaped trees. Over his shrunken knees a rug was spread, though it was midsummer, and his coat was of the thinnest silk. His body above the waist was full of eager motions, and his delicate hands were hardly for a moment quiet as he talked to the man-servant who pushed his chair, but the limbs under the concealing rug were absolutely still.

"What's this, Morgan? What's this?" he burst out, irritably. "I hear voices—chattering voices! Can I never ride out but I must be gaped at? Is this a public pleasure-ground?"

Morgan stopped the chair and coughed apologetically.

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"It's a good while you've not been 'ere, sir, and they seemed to take an enjoyment in it, especially the old summer-'ouse, sir, and the young lady being so quiet, and hofferin' to go, if agreeable, sir——"

"But those are children's voices!"

"Yes, sir; the two little lads, sir; and the young lady seems a kind of governess, sir, though young for the place. She told me she was bound to keep 'em hout in the hair, sir, most of the day, and the sun bein' sometimes bad for her 'ead she would sit in the summer-'ouse if convenient, which there was a great gap in the hedge, sir, and the boys crept between the bars. There's no one else as hever comes, Mr. Damon, you may be sure of that, sir."

"Very well. Turn the chair and I will go to the south end."

But, just as Morgan stepped behind his master again, a shrill voice broke the decorous quiet of the trees.

"Ladies and gentlemens, it gives me great pleasure to winderdooce——"

"Interduce, you silly!"

"To interduce Mr.—Mr.——"

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"James Russell Lowell, Esquire!"

"Mr. Jay Wussell Odell, 'Squire, who will talk to us this afternoon on—on——"

"Temperance, woman suffrage, and veg'tarinism!" interrupted the second voice, impatiently. "Now, go back, Waldy, and be audience."

"Bless my soul, how extraordinary! James Russell Lowell—what does the child mean?" muttered the invalid.

Morgan smiled patronizingly.

"They're very hodd children, sir," he explained, "very hodd, and as strange to look at. Many's the time I've listened to 'em, sir. Would you care to see 'em, Mr. Damon? They're right behind the summer-'ouse, sir. They'll not see you, for they're that took up with the game, sir, they know nothing helse for the time being."

At a nod from his master he propelled the chair down a side path, and stopped just behind a drooping bough.

Before them, on an immense stump levelled off and vine-draped, stood a youngster of eight or nine. He wore awkwardly cut knee-trousers of checked

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blue gingham, a loose blouse of the same, gray woollen stockings, and exaggeratedly broad-toed shoes. No belt nor neck-tie adorned his suit, which was held together by large, yellowish bone buttons. His light brown hair was shaved tight to his head, his gray eyes frowned out under almost colorless eyebrows. Altogether he looked like a member of some institution for unfortunate children. Below him, seated on a large stone evidently dragged from the wall, was another boy of perhaps six. In everything but size he was the facsimile of his brother—eyebrows, square-toed boots, ugly clothes, and severe frown.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” exclaimed the orator, didactically. “It is high time that these principles was known to all of you. We are at a very dangerous point indeed, and you all oughter know it. When an ignorant Irishman can cast a ballot denied—denied—I mean, when an ignorant Irishman is denied to women cultivated as we are here——”

A burst of laughter interrupted the

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speaker, and he turned inquiringly toward the sheltering bough.

"Come here, sir, and tell me your name," called the invalid, and without a moment's hesitation, the older boy climbed down from the stump and walked over to the chair. He neither smiled nor looked shy. He did not appear even interested. With the same solemn frown, and the same didactic manner, he announced:

"I am Thoreau Channing Parker Dilts, and he," pointing to his brother, "is Ralph Waldo Emerson Dilts."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "And what was that mixture of folly you were spouting?"

"'Tisn't a mixture of folly—it's a lekshure," said Thoreau Channing Parker Dilts, rebukingly.

"Where did you hear it?"

"My mother gives it. My mother is Mrs. Lucia Harriet Dilts: she knows a good many lekshures."

"Oh! And are you and your brother here alone?"

"No, Cynthia's in the summer-house.

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Cynthia says she won't stay out in the air because it's hyg'enic. She stays there all the time. She hates sanitary things."

Ralph Waldo Emerson Dilts had been slowly approaching them, and he now opened his mouth and said, briefly:

"Cynthy's eating flesh-pots!"

"What? What? Bless my soul, Morgan, what does he mean?" cried the invalid.

"Waldy means that she longs after them, not eats them," his brother explained. "My mother says that all she thinks of is flesh-pots."

"*Flesh-pots?*"

"Of Egypt. It is in the Bible. But it never happened, really—Waldy thinks it did. It's only a symbol. The whole Bible," he continued, raising his voice and looking sternly at Morgan, "is only a symbol. We are not to regard it as anything else. A priest-ridden multitude——"

"Dear me, dear me!" murmured the old gentleman. "You are the most extraordinary child I ever saw! You are uncanny, positively. Has Cynthia found

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many flesh-pots in my summer-house? I never knew there were any there."

At that moment the door of the summer-house opened, and a tall slender girl appeared. At first glance she seemed to resemble the boys closely, but a careful inspection brought out the fact that the likeness was only one of costume. She wore a scant skirt and shapeless blouse of the same blue checked gingham that clothed the boys. It was absolutely unadorned by frill or tuck, buttoned together with the same hideous bone buttons, and short enough to display ankles in gray stockings and heavy, square-toed shoes. But she did not really look like them. Her eyes were almost black, her eyebrows straight and well marked; her hair, which was cut short like a boy's, dark and curly. In spite of her orphan-asylum uniform she was a very pretty girl, though she lacked color, and her expression was sad to discontent.

Like the boys, she showed no embarrassment, but came straight to the chair.

• "If I trouble you by going in the sum-

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mer-house, I will stop it," she said, abruptly.

The old gentleman looked curiously at her. "Not at all," he said, courteously, "not at all. Do you prefer it to the park? I should think the air——"

"Oh, the air!" she burst out, with a sudden gesture of contempt, "I'm tired of air!"

"Indeed!" he replied. "When you have been ill for months together, and must go without it, you will not feel so."

She made no answer, and a little silence fell on them all. Presently he said, whimsically, "And why is your name not Mary Lyon Larcom Stowe Dilts, my dear? 'Cynthia' was never a philosopher or a reformer, was she?"

"My name is not Dilts at all," she replied quickly. "It's Cynthia Maydew."

"Cynthia Maydew," he repeated. "It is almost too sweet to be true. A charming name. And how old are you, Cynthia Maydew?"

"I am seventeen," she said.

He looked at her fixedly. His face grew

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sad. "I had a daughter, and she was seventeen just before—before she left me," he said softly. "But she was happier than you look, my dear."

"I am not happy at all," Cynthia answered, in a matter-of-fact tone. She might have been saying that she was not cold at all.

"Seventeen, and pretty to look at, and well and strong, and not happy? How is that, Cynthia Maydew?"

"I suppose it is because I do not care to lead the higher life," she replied, calmly, "and because I like mutton-chops and thinner shoes and hate culture. And I would rather do my hair up, and spend the time on it, wicked or not!"

The old gentleman gasped.

"Mutton-chops! Culture! Do your hair up! How extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "Can't you eat chops?"

"We are veg-tarians," explained Thoreau Channing Parker Dilts, "and so we don't eat chops."

"What do you eat, then?"

"We eat nuts and beans and porridge,"

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said the boy, in a tone that implied long practice in giving this catalogue, "and then we have grain food. There is more nourishment in one table-spoonful of grain food than in five pounds of beef!"

"Oh, is there?" remarked Mr. Damon. "It doesn't sound very attractive, somehow, and it doesn't seem to make your cheeks very red."

"That's what I said to Aunt Lucia," said Cynthia quickly. "If all these things are so healthy, why aren't the boys better? The little Wallace boys next door are brought up wickedly, she says, and they eat everything; and they are punished, too, and she says that is barbarous——"

"I can hear them cwyng and kicking!" said Ralph Waldo Emerson, in horrified tones.

"But their cheeks are red?" suggested Mr. Damon, smiling.

"Yes, and they stay in more, too," said Cynthia, wearily. "They have such a pretty nursery!"

"Cynthy likes wall-paper," said the older boy. "She says she'd rather have

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germs than slippery, gray paint. She don't like green shades for the windows, either. Curtains," he added, again fixing his eye on Morgan's, "curtains gathers the dust. We don't have 'em."

Morgan stepped back to avoid the frown of this sanitary reformer, and muttered something under his breath.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Damon, briskly, "you boys would like a piece of cake and—and a peach, say? With a glass of milk? A little lunch in the middle of the afternoon is not a bad thing. Suppose you step around with them, Morgan, and see that they get it; I will stay here with Miss Cynthia Maydew, for whom you will please bring a chair from the summer-house."

"They are not allowed to eat cake," said Cynthia, "but the milk I should think they might have, and the peaches. You are very kind——"

"We can't eat peaches *and* milk together, Cynthia," interrupted Thoreau, reprovingly. "We can have either the peach or the milk, but not both."

"Oh, dear," sighed Cynthia, "I didn't

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remember! I knew you couldn't have milk and sugar together, but I didn't know about the peaches."

"Well, we can't; can we, Waldy?" repeated Thoreau, as they followed Morgan.

"And bring us out a little lunch, too, Morgan!" Mr. Damon called, as they disappeared.

Left alone with her host, Cynthia found herself growing strangely confidential. She could not tell why it was that after three years of her present existence, it had suddenly grown so unbearable to her. But whatever the reason, the fact was there. Night after night she dreamed back to the old life, that charming, happy life in the quiet suburban town that the park reminded her of so pleasantly. The little house was so pretty; the pictures and the rugs and the quaint brocades and fans and jugs her artist father had picked up in his wanderings made it a delight to even learn one's lessons there. There was no mother, but Cynthia hardly remembered her, she had died so soon; and Joseph, the Belgian valet, was cook and nurse and

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housekeeper for the little establishment. In the mornings they had lessons, and in the afternoons they jumped on their wheels and took the sketching things and went off together. They put up the easel miles off in the woods, or under a little hill or by a beautiful bend of the river, and Cynthia made lace after the old Flemish pattern Joseph had taught her, or hunted for mushrooms for Joseph's sauces, or wrote little things in French for her father to criticise. Or she sat by him and listened to his descriptions of the wonderful places she was to see with him some day—Venice and Rome and Switzerland and Florence, that city of cities. They were always together, and were always going to be. And when she married some great capitalist or Indian viceroy, he was to have a studio there, just the same. The viceroy and the capitalist, too, he said, might be proud to eat Joseph's omelets occasionally.

There had never been much money, but they had never needed it. Joseph could make a dollar do the work of five, and her father found such pretty, pale sheer lawns

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and soft dull wools in out-of-the-way shops in the city, and gave the dressmaker such amusing and vivid descriptions of how they should be made up that she said his ideas alone were worth the making to her! He had always wanted her to look well, to be pretty.

“It costs no more to do it the right way than to do it the wrong way,” he used to say. “Make the world bright and good to look at, my dear; there’s enough of the other sort! If you’ve only bread and grapes, set them on daintily and wear your prettiest ribbon. Once, in Spain, I had only a handful of nuts for dessert, but the waiter sang me a song while I ate them, and gave me such a bow when I left that I forgot whether it had been a feast or not!”

They would come home from their wandering through the dusk, hungry and happy, with the sketch-book full; and Joseph, in his short white jacket, would greet them at the door, obsequious as a butler, affectionate as an uncle, as they used to say. Then he would stand behind the

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chair, struggling to hide his delight as Mr. Maydew would say, gravely :

“ Joseph, Joseph, I fear this can’t go on ! It won’t do : I can’t afford it. You never got this meat for less than a dollar, Joseph, and we were going to economize, you know, after the chicken yesterday.”

“ Twenty cent, m’sieu, *and ze parslee !*” and his face would break into triumphant smiles.

Then, after dinner, Cynthia would bring the little cup of coffee and the cigarette, and they would sit on the porch and plan out new pictures till bed-time.

She had thought it would never change, that happy life, and yet in one week it was all behind her. Her father had never been strong since her mother’s death, and now it seemed that he was far weaker than they had thought, and must go away at once. There was a different climate for every season, and he could do himself most good by three years of the wandering knapsack life of his student days. To take her with him was out of the question ; there was not money enough, and then, it was not the

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right sort of life for her. She must wait somewhere here for him; the years would pass.

He had a half-brother, living in the city, who was married and had a family of his own. He was not very successful in business, and his wife, Mr. Maydew understood, was a little odd; but she was a well-educated woman and rather sensible and pleasant as he remembered her—he had seen her only once. She would be glad of the little money Cynthia could afford to pay them, and would look after her with her own children. The shock that the knowledge of his condition had brought him had told a little on her father's nerves, and he began to fear that he had not brought her up properly—not given her the advantages of a more normal family life.

“And that is what Aunt Lucia said as soon as I came,” Cynthia added.

Morgan appeared at just that point in her confidences with a loaded tray; another servant followed with a standard to hold it. He set it out before the invalid chair, and

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an irrepressible smile of delight brought out a hitherto concealed dimple in Cynthia's cheek. She had not seen a luncheon like that for three years. On the heavy silvery damask were dainty plates of willow-ware—deep Canton blue; one held crimson and yellow peaches, another was heaped with fairy-like lettuce sandwiches, cut wafer-thin; on a third lay thick slices of fruit-cake. Two tall slender glasses held a fragrant ice-filled drink, and by Cynthia's plate a slender bunch of water-lilies had been placed.

"Very good; very good, indeed," said Mr. Damon. "Now, my dear Miss Cynthia Maydew, I hope you will eat as much as I should like to," he concluded, noticing with approval the graceful motions of the slim wrists in the ill-fitting blue checked sleeves as she served him with an ease noted by Morgan as well as his master.

"And as the sun will soon be too hot just here, suppose we go into the summer-house when we have finished. I have no doubt the young gentlemen will like to see the gold-fish and the dogs, Morgan."

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Morgan looked incredulous, but departed on his mission, and while Cynthia ate and drank with more appetite than she had felt for a long while, her host talked most entertainingly, drawing out much information in a quiet way and appreciating better than she knew the empty dreariness of her life.

"It isn't that Aunt Lucia doesn't mean to be kind," she said sadly, as Morgan's assistant returned for the tray, "but we are so different, she and I, and—and she is very hard to disagree with. All this last year I've been thinking, 'It's only one year more—only one;' but now that father has this invitation and the cruise is for two years, and of course he ought to go, it seems as if I couldn't bear it! He's cured now, but the doctor says that this trip will make it perfectly certain, and that it's the best possible thing for him."

"Perhaps the time will pass quicker than you think," said the old gentleman, kindly. "At any rate, come here as often as you like, Miss Cynthia Maydew, if the summer-house pleases you."

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For she was rising to go. The clock in the near-by church-tower had struck five, and Thoreau Channing Parker Dilts was calling her from the gap in the hedge.

"We have to get the car," she explained, quickly. "It goes in five minutes; you have been very kind," and she was gone.

Left alone, Mr. Damon sat in silence, Morgan standing silent behind him.

"Take me to the summer-house, Morgan," he said, finally. "It's many a year since I went in there."

"Yes, sir; but it's dreadful dusty in there, sir—dreadful. All forsaken and not used, like——"

He stopped abruptly at the look on his master's face, and wheeled the chair into the low room. A quick relief came into his honest eyes.

"It's none so dusty, Mr. Damon, after all, sir, is it?" he said, cheerfully. Indeed, it was not.

The hard-wood floor was neatly brushed, the worn old rugs tenderly coaxed into the best possible shape, the chairs dusted, the little fireplace cleared of soot and rubbish.

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The faded water-colors were hung with an unerring taste in the best light, the rain-washed soggy cushions piled as lightly as might be on the big rustic divan, and over the mantel and on the broken frames of the pictures graceful lengths of the vine that overrun the house were thrown. On a little rickety tea-table some broken cups and saucers were carefully arranged, the tarnished spoons laid in a row, a bunch of golden-rod in the middle.

"She did this, bless her heart!" the old gentleman murmured, half to himself.

"Yes, sir, and gathered those broken cups out from the fire, sir; and asked me for a broom, sir, but I had forgot it," said Morgan. "I thought there'd be no objection, sir, as no one helse 'as hever come, which it was the little lad making a speech to the gardener's boy as drew my attention to 'em first, sir. He's a hodd one, sir, if ever was."

But Mr. Damon was not so much interested in the little lad.

"Those cushions are all faded and stained, and those rugs are disgraceful!"

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he exclaimed. "The chairs are broken, too, and the wainscot discolored. Get some fresh cushions, Morgan, and see to the furniture. I'll send a man—or, wait! Louis shall see to it himself: it will give him something to do. It is shameful that the place should be so neglected. To think that all her pretty little womanly instincts—flesh-pots, indeed!"

And Morgan wheeled him away wonderingly.

II.

The noisy, jarring car-ride was almost unnoticed by one, at least, of the blue-ginghamed trio; Cynthia's heart was light, her courage high. She had found a friend; somebody understood her, somebody realized the value of all the graceful, lovely arts of life she had almost begun to believe a foolish idiosyncrasy of her own idle hours. Somebody thought her life worth while, even if she had not the high impersonal aims of her aunt, and neglected the numerous causes that occupied that

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lady's attention. For though he had said nothing of the sort, the pleasant, whimsical regard of the old gentleman had somehow indicated that a kindly fellow-feeling for all, a braveness under hard circumstances, a desire to do one's duty, and a faculty for graceful artistic fashions of living were not utterly unworthy characteristics for a little maid of seventeen. *He* did not think that her father had brought her up scandalously!

Her aunt was not quick to notice changes of expression in individuals, her mind being fixed for the most part on humanity as a whole. But there was a confidence in Cynthia's manner, a sparkle in her eye, that recalled even to Mr. Dilts, a small, unobtrusive, almost speechless man, the pretty pink-frocked girl with her bunch of wavy hair that came to them three years ago. That frock and her few others had worn out and grown too small, and the fly-away locks had long since been cut; he privately regretted the change of coiffure and the inevitable blue gingham—Aunt Lucia bought it by the bolt—and went so

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far as to say so once, in his meek, unconvincing fashion.

But his remonstrances were drowned in the flood of Aunt Lucia's eloquence. Were she and her family to stand publicly and privately for "plain living and high thinking," and the child given her especially for the value of her influence to avoid it all? Would that be consistent? Would it be even honorable?

"Would it be reasonable or proper in me, William Dilts," she demanded, "believing as I do that every moment spent upon our mere personal comfort beyond decently clothing and suitably nourishing ourselves, is not only foolish, but wicked, in view of the hundreds of souls and bodies that it is our duty to lead to higher things, to allow a member of my household to act otherwise? Am I to preach one thing and practise another?"

"No, no, Lucia, I s'pose not—I s'pose not!" he returned, hastily, and thanked heaven that even his wife's principles did not compel him to brave society and his business in blue gingham garments.

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Cynthia had rebelled faintly at first, as she had shrank from the heavy plain stoneware of the unattractive table, the almost bare walls, painted a grayish brown with a black stencil bordering, the utter lack of ornament or beauty in the furniture of the house, which was, however, spotlessly neat and well-ventilated. But she was a docile child, trained to believe that those who were older knew better than she, and, more than that, she was adaptable by nature. The separation from her father had made lesser troubles dwindle, too, and a vague hope that things would change had sweetened the first two years. But now that she was used to her loneliness, her starved sense of beauty and simple pleasures asserted itself with double strength, and demanded something to lighten the long time yet before her. Her intuitions, growing with her growth into womanhood, warned her that she was losing her cheerful, sunny nature; she craved the conditions of her early life as a plant craves air and warmth.

And the little tea in the park-like garden had put the finishing touch to her resolu-

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tion. After supper, which was eaten in silence, as the children were not allowed to talk, Mr. Dilts had nothing to say, and Mrs. Dilts was absorbed in contemplation, Cynthia approached her aunt shyly.

"May I speak to you a moment, before you go out to the lecture, Aunt Lucia?" she asked.

"Certainly, if you make haste," replied Aunt Lucia. "And while you are speaking, help me sort these syllabi, Cynthia. The lectures on 'Reincarnation' and 'Sanitary Housefurnishing' are mixed."

But Cynthia did not pick up the syllabi.

"It's only this, Aunt Lucia," she said. "I would like a little money to get another dress. I am very tired of this one, and I am sure Father would not want me to wear it; and I am too old now to wear my hair short—it will hardly be long enough before Father comes back. I know that you wear yours short because you believe that about not wasting time, but I don't; and I have been thinking it over, and it seems to me like religious beliefs, almost, but not quite

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the same, of course, and Father says it is foolish to argue about those, for you can't ever convince a man who really believes anything. And these heavy shoes have always hurt my feet. And Father asked about my lace and my sketches in his last letter, and though I don't want to displease you, Aunt Lucia, I am going to begin them both again. There isn't any use in my doing that course of reading—I can't understand it at all. I am never going to be a lecturer, like you, and I must entertain Father and try to make a little home for him, as he says, so I can't afford to forget my French or the things he likes. I can never lead the higher life, I am perfectly sure, and it only makes me cross and unhappy to try to. And I shall always like mutton-chops."

Aunt Lucia rose and fastened her black sailor hat by the elastic band that held it on. Then she gathered up the syllabi and grasped the door-knob.

"I am sorry you have wasted all this time, Cynthia, by telling me so many things I already know," she said, placidly. "No

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one conversant with the laws of Cause and Effect could be surprised that the result of such a total lack of proper training as your father allowed is what it is. A nature so irresponsible as his was totally inadequate to the training of anything, much less a human soul, with all its responsibilities and capacities for growth and culture. But to proceed to the point. If you have still materials for your sketching and lace-making—though how you can have the heart for it, since I described to you the degraded condition of the unfortunate creatures that make it in their native country, I cannot imagine—you are perfectly at liberty, of course, to continue them, if you do it in your room, where Bridget and the callers and the children are not influenced by it. Also, if you feel that you are justified in bestowing the time on it, I will make no open objection to your letting your hair grow. But it will be impossible for you to buy yourself any shoes or any new clothes, for you have no money.”

“No money, Aunt Lucia? But there must have been some saved——”

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“I am sorry to interrupt you, Cynthia, but I have no time to spare. I had not intended to worry you by informing you of matters that are not to be helped, but your behavior compels me to do so. Your father’s cottage has not been rented for a year. The artist who had it the first year went abroad, and Mr. Dilts could find no one to take his place. Most people, unlike your father, do not feel justified in living in a place which requires such expenditure in cab-fares and bicycles. The money saved from your dress and other useless luxuries, added to the money your Uncle William has been able to get from the rent of the lower floor alone—they would not pay for the garden or the barn—will just cover the actual cost of your living here. Your lodging, even if I were unwilling to give it to you, which I am happy to say is not the case, you have really earned by your taking care of the children through the summer, addressing my circulars, copying my lecture notes, and helping me with the house accounts. It has gratified me exceedingly to see you a wage-earner in

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every sense of the term, even while you considered yourself merely doing a kindness—another point on which your father and I differ as to the bringing-up of children.

“ Now, by spending no more than I have been accustomed to spend for your clothes, and by continuing to give me the help you have in the mornings, you can live very well for two years, with the present rent for the cottage, and your father need not be troubled with the matter. Your uncle thought it best to tell neither of you, so long as you both were satisfied, and I assented, though I did not thoroughly agree with him. You can think it over, and if you still wish the extra money, you can write to your father, though I doubt if he can spare it with the expenses of this cruise. I hope you realize, Cynthia, that in any real grief you would not lack my sympathy, but that with my views and knowing you in no actual want or trouble, I cannot spare the time to discuss the matter further, unless you do not understand the case clearly.”

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Though there were many people who found fault with Aunt Lucia, no one had ever been heard to suggest that she could not express herself clearly. She was accustomed to making herself perfectly understood, and on this occasion she met with her usual success. If she had been a little more open to conviction she would have admitted that the self-control and courtesy of her niece's reply spoke well for the training of her irresponsible father, but she noticed only that there was no occasion for further explanation, and left the room hastily.

"I understand, Aunt Lucia, and I won't complain any more or take up your time," Cynthia said, quietly. She had to bear a great disappointment; she had already picked out the new dress, a pretty soft dimity, and priced some shoes and ribbons; but relief that she was not in debt, that her father need not be worried, that things might have been worse, broke the force of the blow.

"If a thing must be borne, bear it bravely, Cynthia," he used to say. "We can all

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bear what we must. Don't whine and look tragic, and add to the weight of the world. One of the duties of the educated people, the ones that have had the advantages, is to turn them to account, and make them blossom and smell sweet. It's never so bad but it might be worse. The loads that we happen on now and then many poor fellows stagger under all their lives."

Strangely enough, in the light of this greater misfortune, her past troubles seemed to grow less, her mounting discontent and sad looks less excusable. As Aunt Lucia had said, she was clothed and fed and housed, and able to be a burden to nobody. The habit of consideration for others and adaptability to their dispositions and points of view that her father had steadily taught her, more by example than precept, had made her more able than most girls of seventeen to appreciate her aunt's kindness—yes, even leniency, according to her own point of view.

And if, in the finer sense of the word, she was not thoroughly kind, at least she was just. Not everybody would have acknowl-

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edged the worth of her freely given services so readily. Cynthia knew enough of the world for that.

She need not feel dependent on their bounty now. How glad she was of those hours spent with the boys! She was sorry not to be fond of them: she had tried to make them love her, but they were singularly unattractive children, and cold, too. A strange logical habit of thought, a severe impersonal point of view, made it impossible for one to play with them or cuddle them, like other children. They preferred their own strange games, and she had a conviction that they did not approve of her. Indeed, Ralph Waldo Emerson had told Bridget once that his Cousin Cynthia was badly brought up. How could one tell stories to such a boy? Old Joseph was more of a child. But she had taken them out in the summer and got them ready for school in the winter, and done the syllabi and circulars. And now she would keep it up, and sketch and make the lace in the afternoons, and then, there was the summer-house! That old gentleman had liked

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her, she was sure. He had said to come again.

But almost a week had passed before she led the children through the gap in the hedge. The good resolutions were strengthening, but the dull days brought the inevitable reaction; the disappointment cut deeper when the sharp surprise had worn off. The blue gingham and the hot, bare house seemed the more loathsome by contrast with the brave resolution she had planned; the children more uncanny than ever now that she had obligations to them.

She knew that her father's letters resolutely hid all his doubts and disappointments, so she made her own pleasant with the only material she had—prophecies for a happy future; and she cheered herself, or tried to, by recalling the fact that her winter suit of blue serge was a degree less hideous than the blue gingham.

But two years is long to seventeen, and it was a sad-faced girl with a pathetic droop to her shoulders that escorted Thoreau to his favorite stump and established Ralph Waldo Emerson on his bench of stone.

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She strolled half-unconsciously to the summer-house, and sat on a rustic seat near the door.

That must have been a happy daughter—for it was her summer-house, she had been sure of that as soon as the old gentleman had spoken of her. Were they as contented together as she and her father? At least *her* father was not left alone!

A sudden thought came to her—perhaps that daughter's name was on the sketches. She opened the door, and caught her breath for surprise. For it was a summer-house transformed. The dull floor had been stained and waxed, and shone like a mirror around the fresh jute rugs. The divan was piled with bright-colored, fluffy cushions, and the broken, discolored chairs replaced by new ones of rich green color and quaint, twisted wicker shapes. The little water-colors, though in just the places she had hung them, were rematted and framed, with vines thrown over them, nevertheless, as she had left them. A fire was laid ready on the hearth, and by it stood a low

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tea-table with dainty cups spread on spotless linen, and the alcohol-lamp ready to light. A tall Japanese jar near by held masses of golden-rod, and on a shelf built in the wall lay a heap of gay-covered magazines.

As her eye fell on the space above the mantel she gave a little cry of delight and amazement, for there hung two of her father's best pictures: one an original water-color, the other a photograph from his most successful work, an autumn field in the late afternoon.

"Good-day, Miss Cynthia Maydew!" came through the wide, high window, "and how do you think I have carried out your ideas as to the proper care of summer-houses?"

Her face was answer enough.

"And you like the pictures? (Roll the chair in, Morgan.) Louis hung them. That's my nephew, and he had these landscapes.

"'Hugh Maydew!' said he, 'and no one else! Best teacher I ever had!' and he brought 'em down. I thought perhaps

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you'd pour us out some tea, Miss Cynthia Maydew?"

Her eyes sparkled. But suddenly her face fell. She glanced at his sheer silk coat and the dainty pillows, and then at her scant short skirt, stained when she had crept through the green hedge.

"I—I'm not pretty enough for these pretty things!" she cried, abruptly. "I spoil them—they are——"

"The flesh-pots of Egypt!" he interrupted quickly, "and being an artist's daughter, as well as a daughter of Israel, you want to match them! Well, well, my dear, it would be a pity for the picture to complain of the frame that it was too pretty! Morgan, if you will take Miss Cynthia Maydew to Mrs. Hoyt, she will have a message for her, I think, and you will not be needed."

She was not argumentative by nature or training, and she followed Morgan quietly, wondering what message Mrs. Hoyt could have for a stranger.

But when she saw the white ruffled gown on the bed in the big mahogany chamber,

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and hung in ecstasy over all colors of ribbons for neck and waist, she understood. Silken hose and soft light slippers, and lace-edged handkerchief and tucked petticoat, all were ready, and a kindly housekeeper to help her with them.

"Yes, miss, they were Miss Lydia's. Seventeen, miss, and tall and slim, like you, when she died. The house has never been the same since. You'd like the pink—the rose pink? 'Twas her favorite color, miss. Yes, her feet were long and slender, too; and Morgan says he's never seen him so interested in years, miss, so we're all delighted. I never thought he'd have these things touched again—and as fussy about the old summer-house; up early to see about it, and sending Mr. Louis off to town to get the things."

"But my hair, Mrs. Hoyt! It's so short and ugly—if it would only grow!" Cynthia mourned, trying not to stare too hard at the charming figure the tall pier-glass threw back at her.

"Don't you wish it, miss; don't you wish it! 'Twas the fever Miss Lydia died of,

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though not directly, and for months her pretty hair was short and curly like a boy's, miss. He spoke of that to me. 'It's strange, Mrs. Hoyt, isn't it?' says he—those were his very words."

She fluttered down the stairway—a princess in a fairy tale. She had not lived with conventional people, for artist-folk are rarely surprised at the beautiful in life, and take good-fortune more easily than most. She was too happy to wonder much; fate was kind to her, and her pleasure gave pleasure to others—that was enough.

In the summer-house the loaded tray was waiting, Morgan behind it. On the couch, thrumming a guitar, lay a tall graceful boy, who jumped to his feet before she reached the threshold.

"Nunky, Nunky, you estimable relative, a vision is approaching!" he whispered, loudly. "Why didn't you prepare a fellow? This is only my second-best coat!"

"Go away with you!" returned the old gentleman, "she's just a nice girl, that's all."

But he had never seen the nice girl with

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crimson lips and rosy cheeks, standing straight, in floating skirts of ruffled white, then courtesying shyly before him; and even Morgan stared like any untrained servant.

"My nephew Louis, Miss Cynthia Maydew," said Louis's uncle at last, recovering himself, "and I almost want an introduction myself! Give us some tea before we eat you up, pink ribbons and all!"

There may have been chicken sandwiches and grapes and little sponge-cakes as good as those before, but no one of them believed it. And when it was over, and they had talked an hour, and she had sung her little French songs to Louis's guitar and wondered how she had ever been sad in a world that held that summer-house, and said faintly that it was time to go and Mrs. Hunt would be expecting her, they showed her a tall screen in front of the little ell, and behind it was a little toilet-table with a mirror and a tiny closet—with her gingham on a hook there.

"That is for your glass slippers, little Cinderella Maydew," he said, chuckling irrepressibly, "and now we'll bid you good-

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day. Your haughty sisters are calling even now—they suspect the flesh-pots!”

And indeed, Thoreau Channing Parker Dilts feared that they had lost the car, and explained his fears to his brother in disapproving tones.

“To-morrow, next day—any day!” called the old gentleman. “Whenever you care to come!”

And Cynthia, remembering his words, “When it gets too cold, we’ll move the summer-house in, won’t we, Louis?” felt her heart grow lighter still as she hurried on the despised uniform.

What of it? It was only a disguise, after all. It went with the work of life that everyone must have, her father said, and to the girl’s happy fancy the work was the dream and this harmless, graceful game the reality of her days. Even when she could not come she would know it was all there—the pictures and the cushions and the white ruffled gown; and in her earnest, girlish way she hoped that she might be good enough to deserve it. It was a romance, a picture-book adventure, and

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yet it was solid and real—as real as the little boys that trotted soberly beside her.

How Joseph and her father would enjoy it! It was a play after their own hearts.

And something of the fascination of it actually became apparent to Aunt Lucia when she knew about it.

“Old Mr. Damon is what is called a perfectly respectable man,” she said, “though utterly given over to his own pleasures and regardless of the responsibilities of men of wealth. If it pleases him to waste his time in this way, and you feel that your father would not object, I certainly will make no public protest. What I may feel is another matter.”

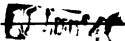

Uncle William smiled uncertainly. “I guess we’re not all alike, Lucia,” he ventured. “I think Cynthia looks better in the face and fatter. What’s one man’s meat, you know——”

“It was the flesh-pots made her fat!” said Waldy, solemnly. “I saw her eat ’em!”

And they all laughed together—even Mrs. Lucia Harriet Dilts.



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